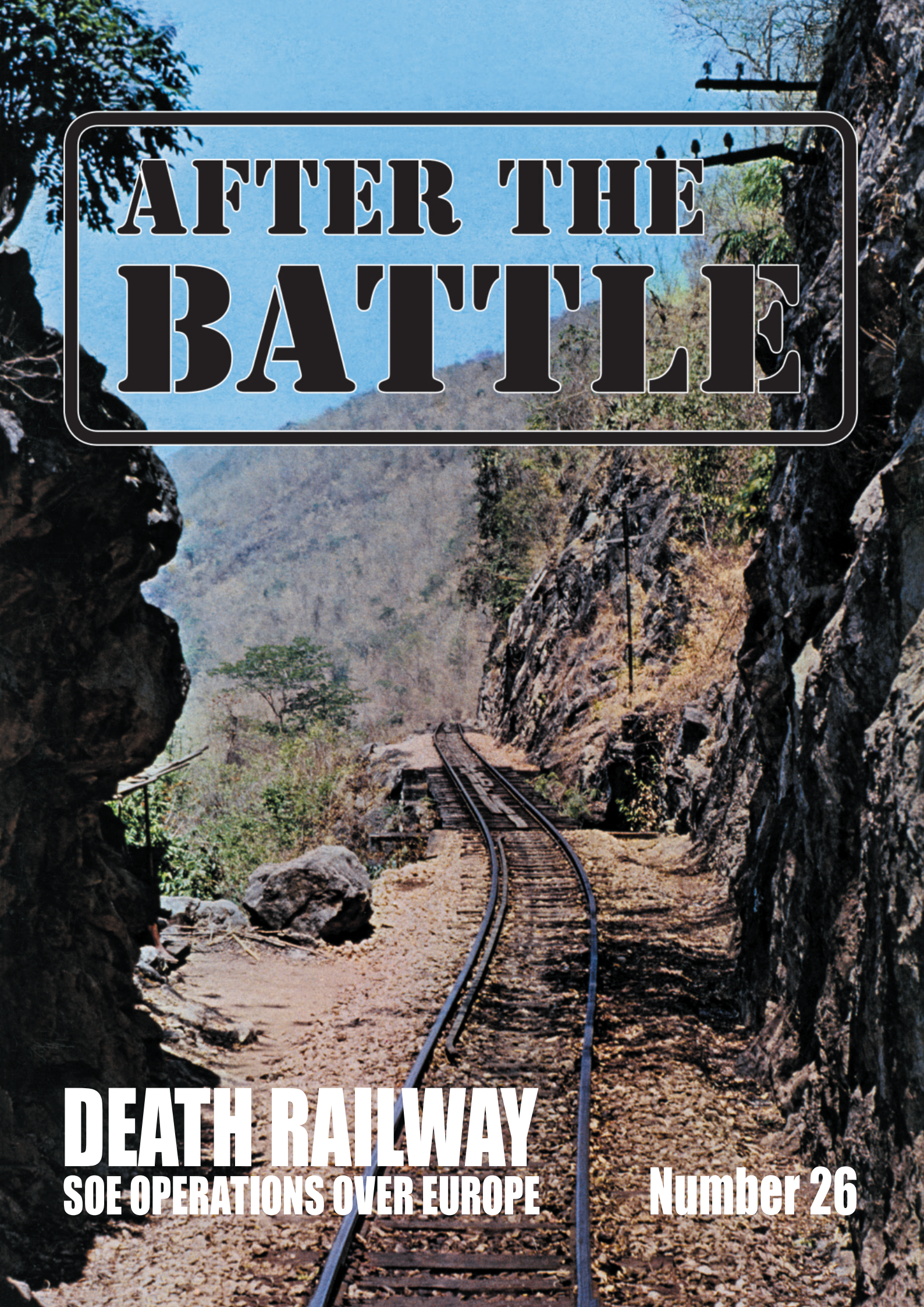
AFTER THE
BATTLE
DEATH RAILWAY
SOE OPERATIONS OVER EUROPE
Number 26

AFTER THE BATTLE

NUMBER 26

Edited by Winston G. Ramsey

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Front Cover: The Death Railway in Thailand 1979: passing the end of the Wampo Viaduct (Kevin Patience).

Centre Pages: In the quiet woods above Maulusmillen in Luxembourg lies this moving memorial to three RAF crewmen and three Belgian secret service agents who failed to return.

Back Cover: The graves of three American unknown soldiers from the First World War at the Meuse-Argonne American Military Cemetery not chosen in the ceremony at Chalons-sur-Marne in 1921.

Acknowledgements:
We are indebted to the US Department of the Army for permission to quote from the *Last Salute — Civil and Military Funerals* for the feature on America's Unknown Soldiers.
Jean Paul Pallud would like to thank M. Rajeau and M. Lecorche for their technical help in the preparation of *SOE Operation Pimento.*

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KILOMETRE CHART OF THE THAILAND TO BURMA RAILWAY

LOCATIONS ON RAILWAY 1942 - 1945 — Distances from NONG PLADUK

000 km	NONG PLADUK, Nonpuradokku
002	Konma (transit camp)
005	Ban Pong, Banponmai
013	Rukke
026	Taruanoi, To Reoa Noi, Talua
039	Tha Muang, Tamuang, Tamoan, Ta Mueng
041	Tung Tung
047	Kao Din
048	Pak Prage
049	Tung Na Talea
051	KANCHANABURI, Kanburi
055	THA MAKHAM, Tamarkan (River Kwae Restaurant) River Kwae Yai/Mae Khlaung
057	Chungkai, Kao Poon, Kaopon
069	Wang Lan, Wanran, Wun Lung
078	Tapon, Won Yen, Wang Yen
088	Bankao, Bangkao
098	Takiren, Tarkilen, Ta Ki Len
108	Arrowhill, Arruhiru (Wang Sing)
110	Lum Sum (for waterfall)
114	Wang Po, Wanpo, Wampo (double viaduct)
121	Chong Cab
125	Wanyai, Wang Yai
130	THA SOE, Tarso, Ta Soe
130	NAM TOK (Railway ends)
139	Tonchan (spring camp)
147	Tampi, Tampines
155	Hin Tok, Hintoku
166	Kanu, Kanyu (several camps)
168	Sai Yoku, Kinsaiyok sub-camps
172	Kinsaiyok Main (waterfalls)
181	Rin Tin, Rinten, Lin Thin
190	Kuei, Kui Ye, Kui Yong
198	Hin Dat, Hindato (hot springs)
208	Brankassi, Purankasi, Prang Kasi
218	Takunun, Dha Khanun, Takanun
229	Namajon, Namajo, Namuchonyai
237	Tomajo, Tamajo, Tamazyo
244	Tamuron Part, Tamuronpato
250	Krian Kri, Kuriankurai, Kreung Krai
258	Kurikonta
262	Konkuita, Konkoita, Concreeta
262.87	MEETING POINT OCTOBER 17 1943
273	Teimonta, Timontar
282	Nikhe, Nikki, Nike
294	Sonkurai, Songkla, Keungkluay
	HERE IS THREE PAGODAS PASS Thailand/Burma border
301 km	Changaraya
311	Anganan, Aungganaung
315	"100 Kilo" Camp, Anganan 2
320	Kyando, Kyondaw
332	Aparon, Apalon
- -	Steel Bridge
337	Aparain
343	Mezari, Mezali, Mesali
349	Kami-Mezari, "Upper Mezali"
354	Ronsi, Ronshii
358	Tanzun, Taungzun
362	Tanbaya, Tambaya ("Hospital")
369	Anakuin, Anaqueen, Anankwin
375	Bekitan, Beke Taung
385	Repo, Retpu
391	Konnokoi
396	Rabao, Alepauk
401	Tettoku
406	Wegare, Wegale SIN-TANBYUZAYA "New Thanbyuzayat"
414 92 km	THANBYUZAYAT Burma Base Camp

		From Moulmein
421 km	Kuwanra	
429	Karuoto, Kawawthut	43 km
433	Kamae, Kamawet	38 km
439	Toku, Tawku	32 km
447	Mudon	24 km
453	Menganen	19 km
461	Pau, Pa-Nuk	11 km
466	Kokani	6 km
471.30 km	MOULMEIN, Morumein	0 km

BRANCH LINE THANBYUZAYAT TO YE:–

THANBYUZAYAT	000 km (going South)
Banga	9
Karotsuhe, Karokpi	14
Anke	19
Tenyu	26
Atsunein	35
Nikkayin	45
Ramayin	55
Karunpe, Taungban	65
Painwan	71
Paraenki	78
YE	86.40 km

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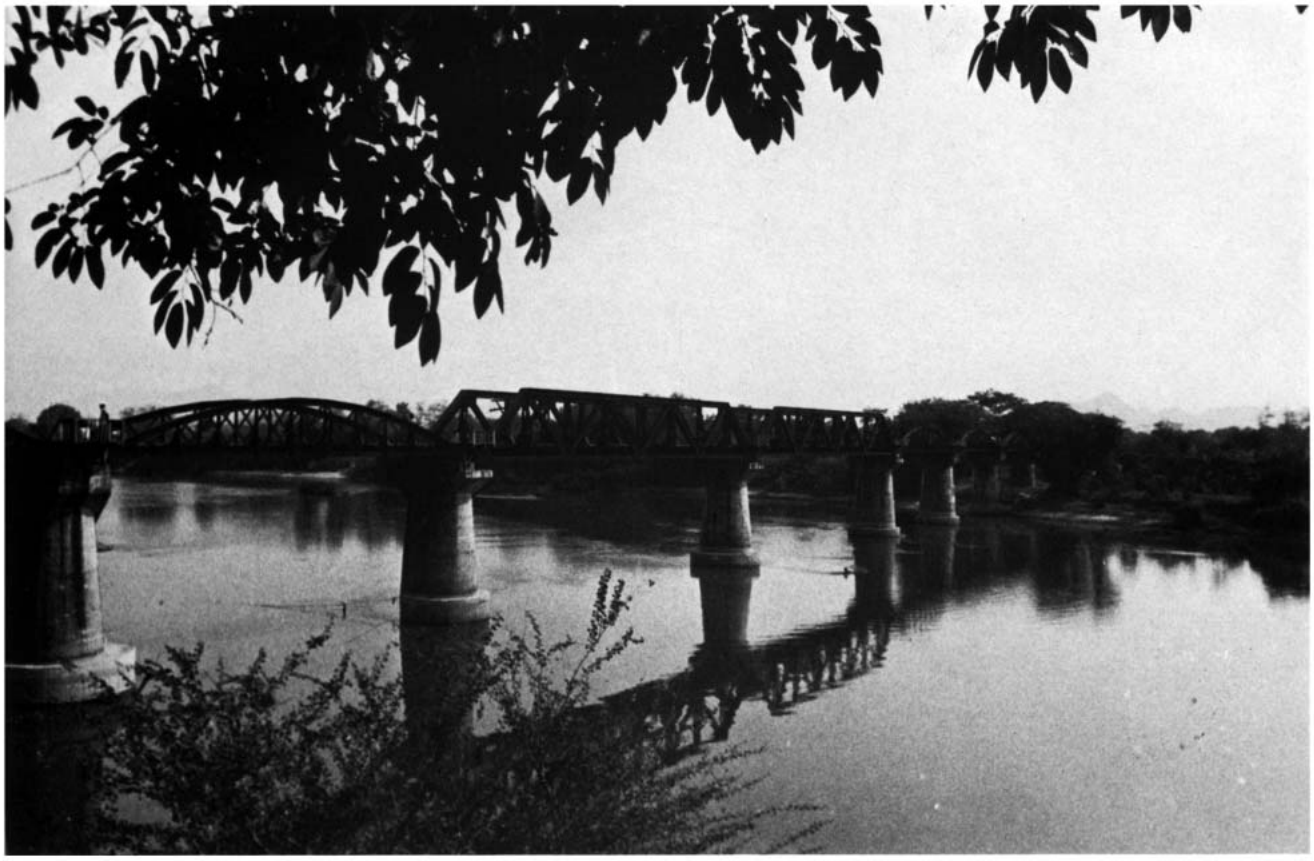


THE DEATH RAILWAY

On December 7, 1941, Japan declared war on the United States and British Empire by launching surprise bombing attacks on Hawaii, the Philippines and Malaya. Then, having concluded an alliance with Thailand in January 1942, the Japanese exploited this stepping stone to further their advances into Burma and Malaya. Within a month Singapore at the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula had been captured and by June the whole of Burma in the north was under Japanese control.

In order to consolidate their gains, the Japanese made plans to improve inland communication to prevent their total reliance on sea transport which was vulnerable to Allied attack. The Imperial General Headquarters therefore decided to extend the railway line from Bangkok in Thailand to Rangoon in Burma via Moulmein. Although engineers who had surveyed the 415km route over the jungle-covered mountains between the Gulf of Siam and the Indian Ocean expressed doubts about the economics of the project (which had been commenced before the war by the two countries concerned but abandoned), wartime necessity decreed that the railway must be built at any cost — either of money or human life.

A vast labour pool was already at the disposal of the Japanese from the thousands of British, Australian, Dutch and American prisoners-of-war who had fallen into their hands during the previous six months. It was planned to begin work from both ends at once, the line to consist of a metre-gauge single track more or less following, first the Mae Khlaung and then the Kwae Noi river valleys.

On June 19, 1942, 'B' Battalion, an advance party of 600 British POWs under Major R. S. Sykes, RASC, entrained at Singapore for Ban Pong, Thailand which they reached four days later. The first task was to construct their own camp, accommodation for the Japanese guards being the priority, followed by the cookhouse, POW accomodation and lastly sick quarters.

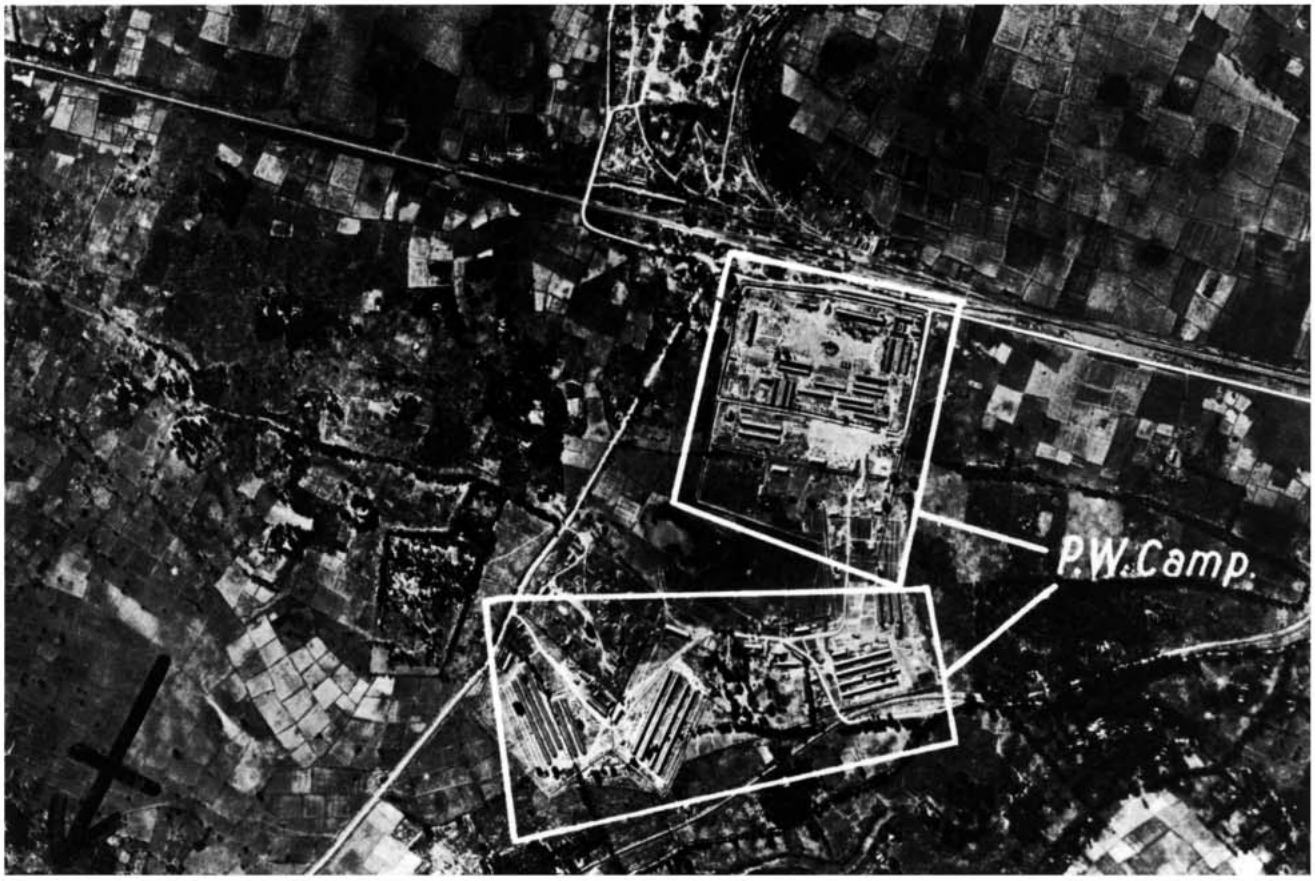
Meanwhile 3,000 Australian POWs under Brigadier A. L. Varley comprising 'A' Force (which had been sent to southern Burma for airfield work) were transferred in September to a camp at Thanbyuzayat to begin the construction of the Burma end of the railway.

The first 55 kilometres from the existing Bangkok-Singapore railway at Nong Pladuk, along the eastern bank of the Mae Khlaung to Kanchanaburi, were relatively easy to construct as the line ran north-west across the flat plain. However at Kanchanaburi, the Mae Khlaung river had to be bridged in order to extend the track northward beside the River Kwae Noi. The crossing point chosen was at Tha Makham which lies on the eastern bank, two kilometres north of the confluence of the Kwae Noi. The wide, fast flowing river proved a difficult obstacle to bridge, especially using unskilled, unwilling and underfed POW labour. Two bridges were planned, designed by the Japanese engineer Futamatsu: a timber trestle bridge about 220 metres long (which was completed by February 1943) and a more permanent, eleven-span concrete and steel construction brought from Java and erected by the POWs a few yards upstream, which was finished four months later.

The total length of the railway was 415 kilometres and official Japanese figures state that the total POW labour force employed on the job was 68,888 but, in addition, some 200,000 Asian workers were 'recruited' at a wage of one Straits dollar a day from the occupied territories. British records claim that 13,000 Australian, 30,000 British, 18,000 Dutch and 700 Americans worked on the railway and that more than 16,000 died on its construction. Many were interred in cemeteries established by the POWs themselves beside the numerous camps along the line; others were buried where they fell. Although precise figures are not available, at least 80-100,000 of the imprest labourers also died.

A word of explanation is necessary to explain the confusion of names which exist for the various stations and camps along the route. The Thai language, having a non-Roman word form was copied, phonetically, by the Japanese, the Allied intelligence services in reports and on maps, and by the various nationalities of POWs. This resulted in the propagation of the many varied spellings in use today and Geoffrey Pharaoh Adams, a POW who worked on the construction of the bridges and track (October 1942 - June 1944) which he has described in his book *No Time for Geishas*, has prepared the comparative list reproduced here with his kind permission. Many places had no names at all, having been carved out of virgin jungle, and these were just referred to as Camp 222km or Camp 249km etc.

On October 17, 1943, the two lines met at Konkuita, the Burma teams having constructed 152 kilometres of track while those from Thailand a total of 263 kilometres. A special ceremony was held by the Japanese to



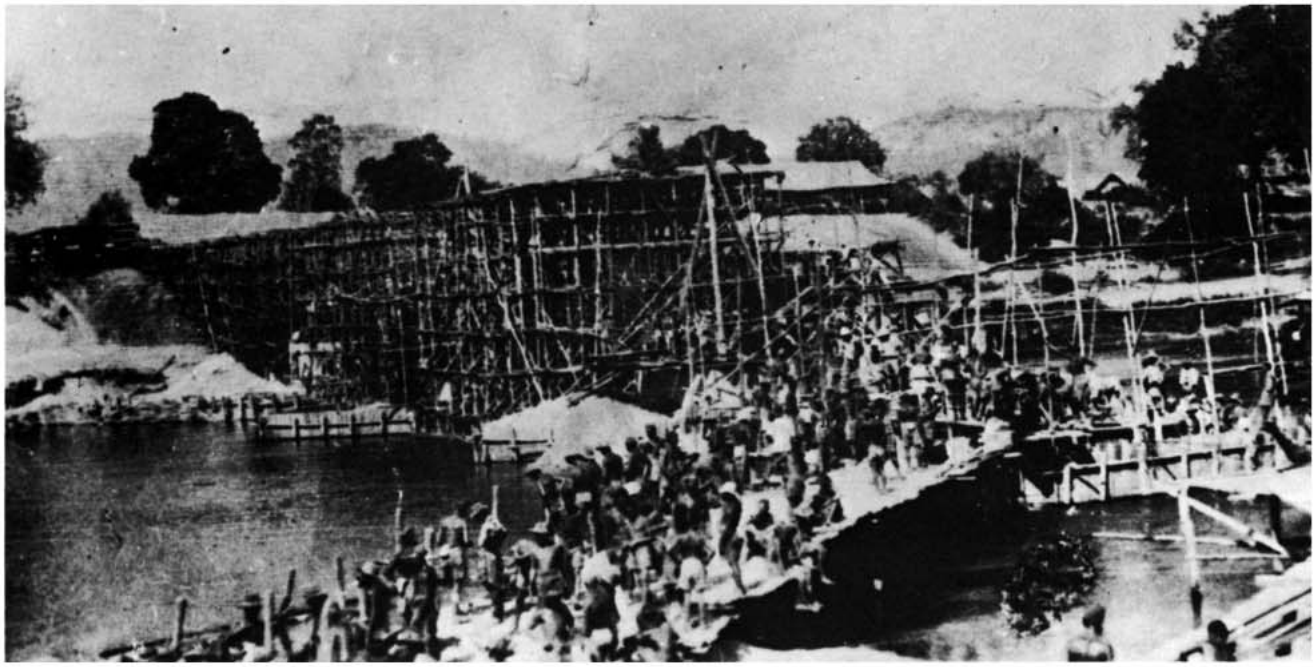
celebrate the opening of the *'taimen rensetsu tetsudo'* (Thailand-Burma Rail Link) and a commemorative medal, which had been cast in the Nong Pladuk railway base workshop, was issued to all the Japanese railway engineers concerned.

At the same time that the railway was constructed, the jungle track which more or less followed the river was improved by the POWs for use as a service road by the Japanese.

The railway and especially the vulnerable bridges across the Mae Khlaung were considered strategic military targets by the Allies and both British and American squadrons were detailed to bomb the line to keep it inoperative. The air attacks took a heavy toll of lives from the prisoners-of-war who were encamped along the line with no protection other than their flimsy bamboo and thatch huts. The raids became more frequent after the line was opened in October 1943 necessitating the retention of POWs to repair and maintain the track. In one raid on Nong Pladuk alone, where the prisoners were

Above: **An RAF reconnaissance photo of the railway line and prisoner-of-war camp at Nong Pladuk on January 1, 1945.** *Below:* **The marshalling yard and station photographed by Kevin Patience in 1979. This was the main terminus for traffic from Bangkok before branching off up the 'death railway'. No trace of the POW camp remains today.**

Left: **The interior of one of the base camp hospitals (FEPOW Club).** *Above:* **The reconstructed hut at Kanchanaburi, now laid out as a museum of the railway by Bhuddist monks.**

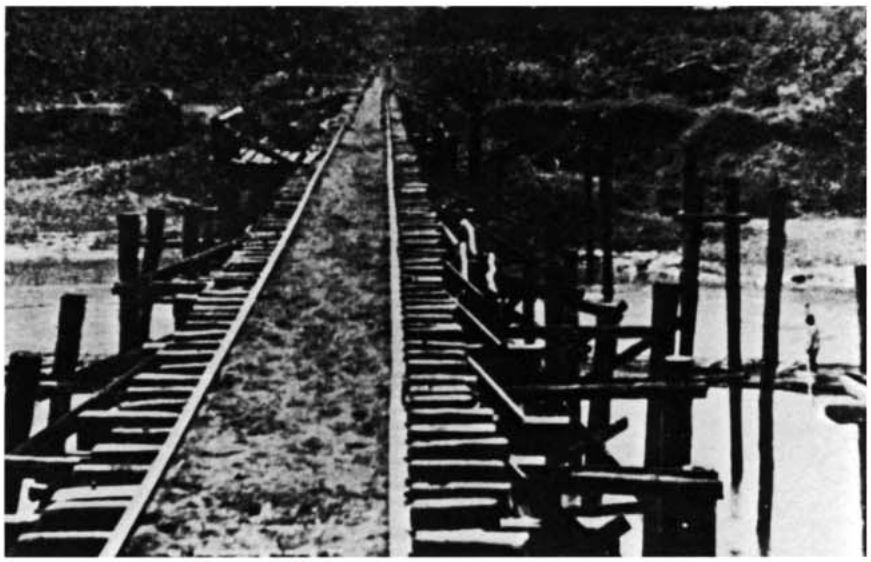


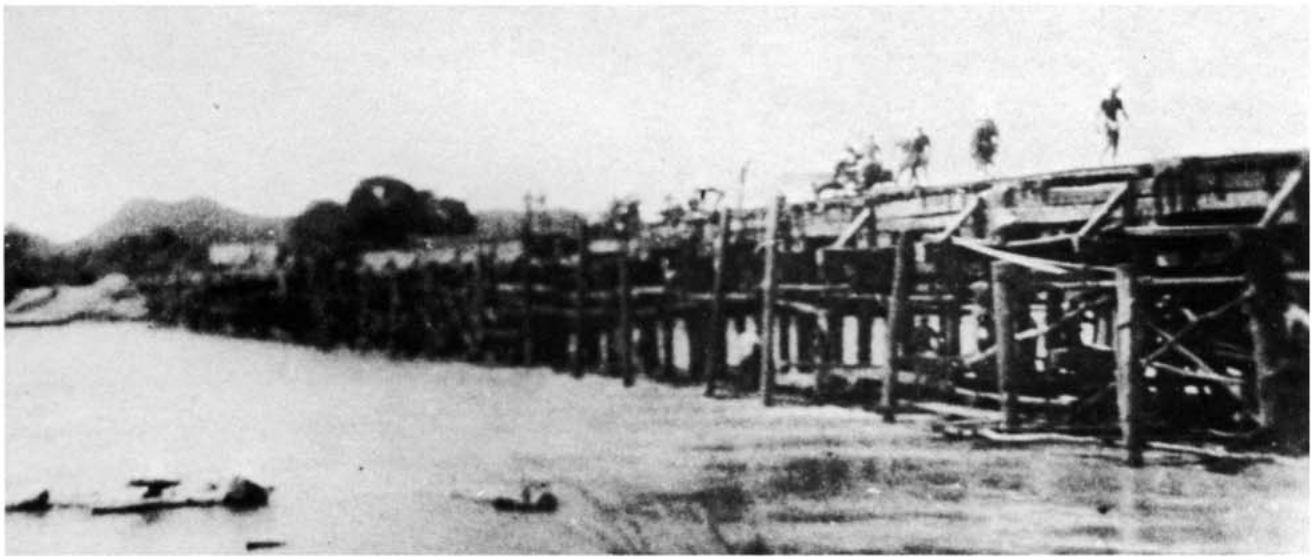
located amongst sidings holding petrol, ammunition and store trains protected by anti-aircraft defences, 95 were killed and 300 wounded.

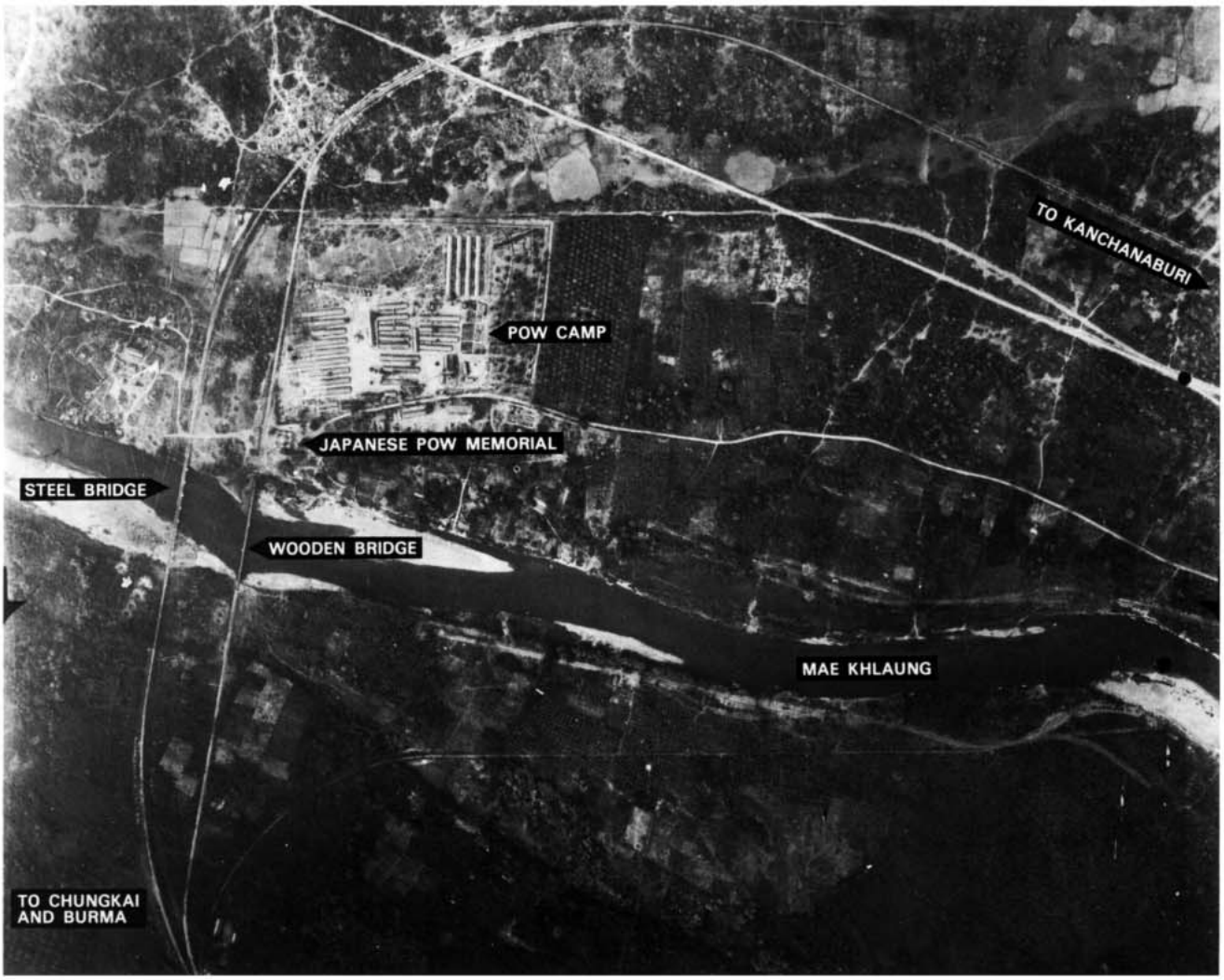
The twin bridges at Tha Makham were a prime target but not until the eighth attack on February 13, 1945 were both the wooden and steel bridge hit although repairs were immediately begun using POW labour. By April the wooden bypass bridge was back in use and an attack to destroy it was mounted by aircraft of the US 7th Bomb Group. One of the bombardiers, Lieutenant Colonel William Henderson, described later what happened:

'On April 2 our crew was alerted for a mission the next day. This began a sequence of events that had some peculiar facets from the beginning. For example, our briefing was just past midnight at 0030 on April 3, with a 0230 take-off. (Our missions usually took off at dawn or later.) When the target curtains were parted and the mission revealed a murmur expressing more than normal impending danger went up. New cruise control techniques and the use of bomb-bay tanks had made it possible for the B-24 to fly missions of more than fifteen hours duration. This would be one of those. It was the wooden bridge at Kanchanaburi. Our 436th Bomb Squadron was to be the lead unit, and my crew was the lead bridge bombing crew.

Above: **The steel bridge under construction in February 1943 (Imperial Japanese Army via G. P. Adams).** *Below and bottom:* **The wooden trestle bridge built as a quick expedient prior to the completion of the permanent bridge. Photos taken in 1945 before it was dismantled (G. P. Adams).**





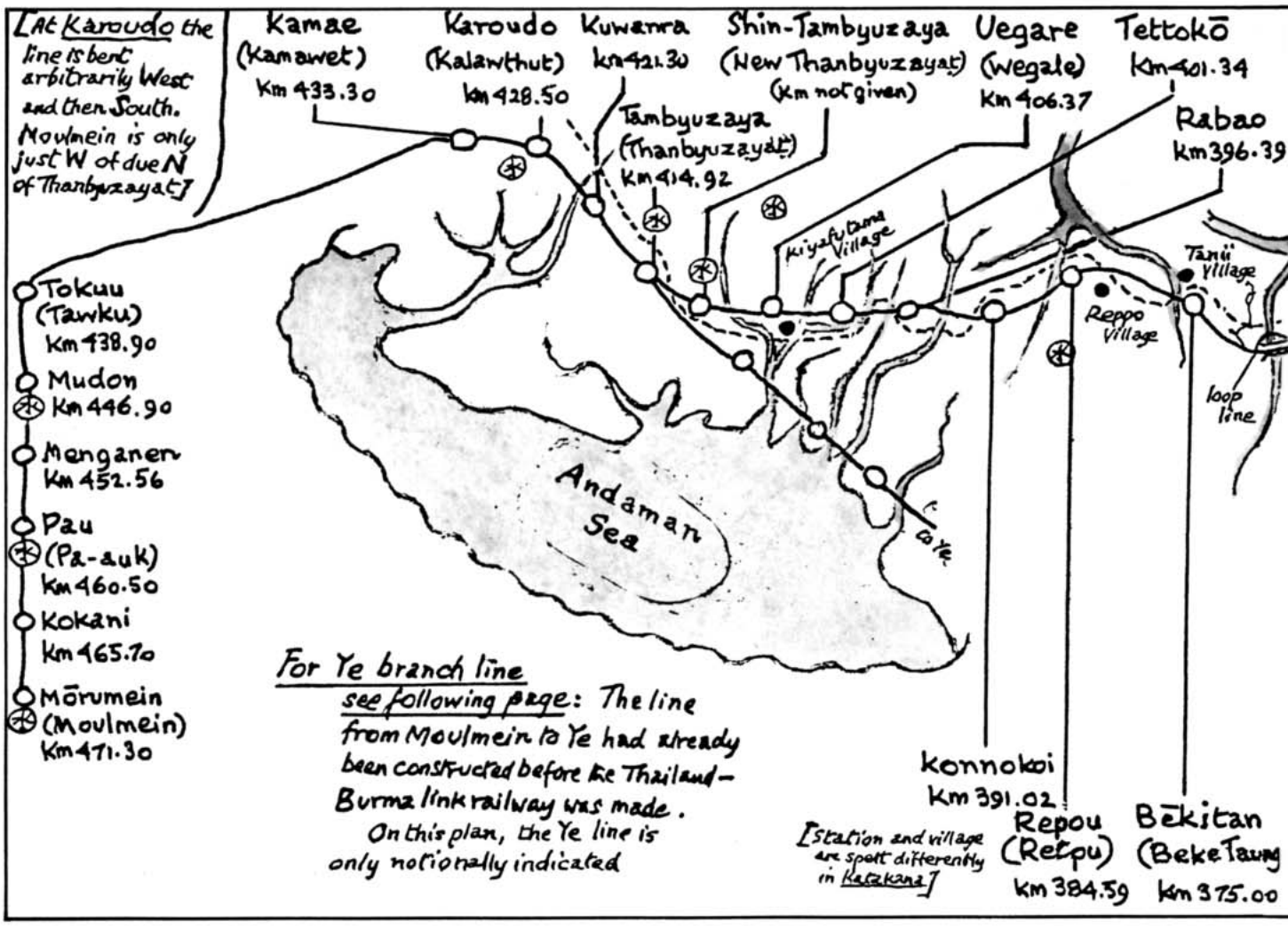

TO KANCHANABURI
POW CAMP
JAPANESE POW MEMORIAL
STEEL BRIDGE
WOODEN BRIDGE
MAE KHLAUNG
TO CHUNGKAI
AND BURMA

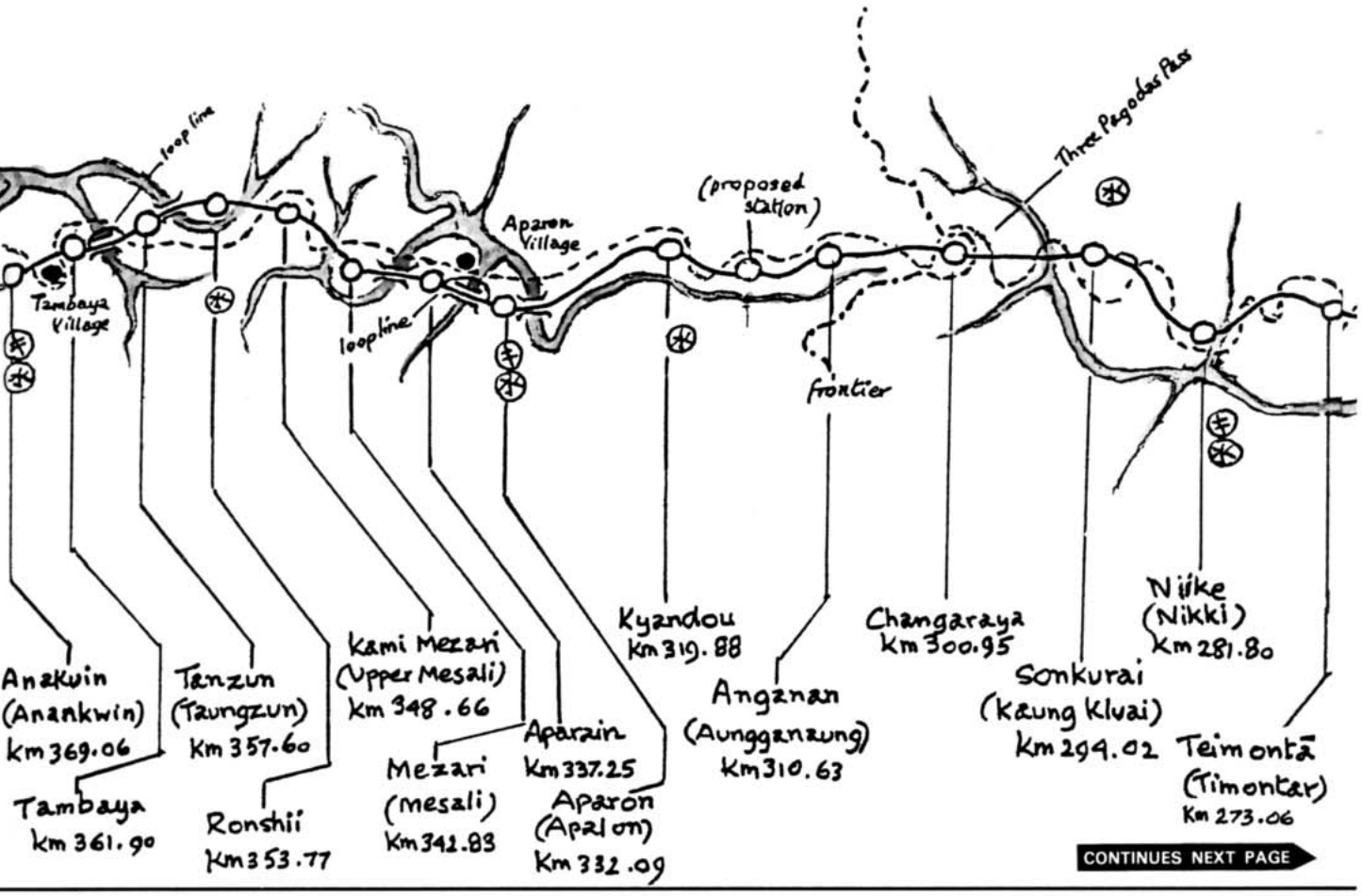
RAF intelligence photographs showing the twin railway bridges at Tha Makham *(photo left)* **and the river southwards to the confluence with the Kwae Noi** *(photo above).* **The point of overlap is indicated by the black spots (Crown Copyright).**

'Since the previous attacks at low level had been unsuccessful because of the necessity of using fixed-angle bombsight techniques, this mission was to be flown at from 4 to 6,000 feet. That was the most accurate altitude for synchronous bombing using the Norden bombsight. It was also an extremely accurate altitude for enemy anti-aircraft batteries. But with the steel bridge already breached, a break in the wooden bridge was essential, regardless of risk. The pattern of attack was to be single aircraft in an extended bomber stream; an anti-aircraft suppression plane was to arrive with the lead bridge bomber. Its mission was to drop anti-personnel fragmentation bombs on the AA batteries. The bombers were loaded with six 'bridge busters' in the forward bomb bay and gasoline tanks in the rear bomb bay. Every bomber was to drop two bombs on each of the three bomb runs.

'Take-off and navigation to the target area were normal except for the long flight at low altitude over water and remote jungles to avoid enemy detection and the slow air speeds to conserve fuel. As we neared the target the flak was light and we noted that the fragment bomb carrier that was to hit the sites had not yet arrived. For some reason only one of my bombs went away on the first pass at the bridge but it was a direct hit on the ten-foot-wide bridge, which looked like the thin edge of a knife blade even at this low altitude. My lone bomb destroyed a large part of the eastern section of the wooden bridge. The two bombs on the second pass were near misses; there was also a noticeable increase in ground fire. With three bombs remaining we began the final run as the flak suppression plane and the next bridge bombing aircraft arrived. When my remaining three bombs dropped everything looked perfect for another hit. The gunners reported flak getting heavier and closer but I requested the pilot to hold a steady heading for a few seconds longer so we could get photographs of the impacts. This move almost cost us our lives. I gave the 'OK to turn' when the bombs hit and, as the wings went nearly vertical in the turn, we were hit by multiple bursts of flak. VHF and Command radio communications were destroyed but, worse yet, the aileron cable was severed, leaving little control of the aircraft. We were frozen in

Left and right: **Photos taken during the RAF attack on June 24, 1945 which hit both bridges, destroying the same spans hit by the Americans in February.**


[At Karoudo the line is bent arbitrarily West and then South. Moulmein is only just W of due N of Thanbyuzayat]
Kamae (Kamawet) Km 433.30
Karoudo (Kalawthut) km 428.50
Kuwanra km 421.30
Shin-Tambyuzaya (New Thanbyuzayat) (Km not given)
Uegare (Wegale) Km 406.37
Tettokō Km 401.34
Rabao Km 396.39
Tambyuzaya (Thanbyuzayat) Km 414.92
Kiyafutama Village
Tanii Village
Repou Village
loop line
Tokuu (Tawku) Km 438.90
Mudon Km 446.90
Menganen Km 452.56
Pau (Pa-auk) Km 460.50
Kokani Km 465.70
Mōrumein (Moulmein) Km 471.30
Andaman Sea
to Ye
For Ye branch line see following page: The line from Moulmein to Ye had already been constructed before the Thailand–Burma link railway was made. On this plan, the Ye line is only notionally indicated
konnokoi Km 391.02
Repou (Repu) km 384.59
Bēkitan (Beke Taung) Km 375.00
[Station and village are spelt differently in Katakana]



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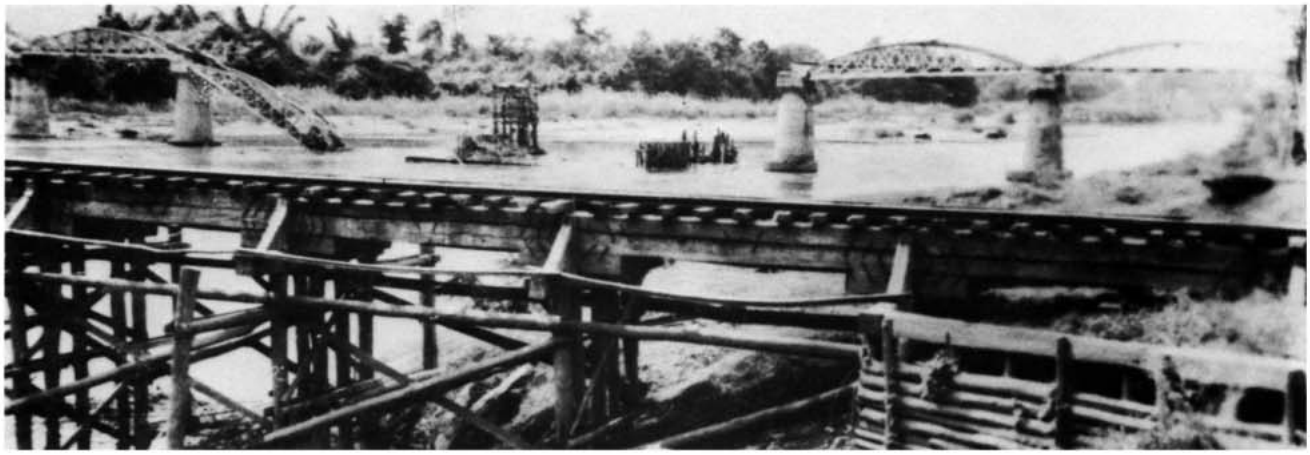


a turn and, as we swept in an ever widening arc around the bridge and camp, I recall thinking of having to parachute into enemy hands and help rebuild the bridge I had just destroyed. After circling the area one and a half times, the wings finally levelled and by using full throttles and rudder we were able to head for the Bay of Bengal.

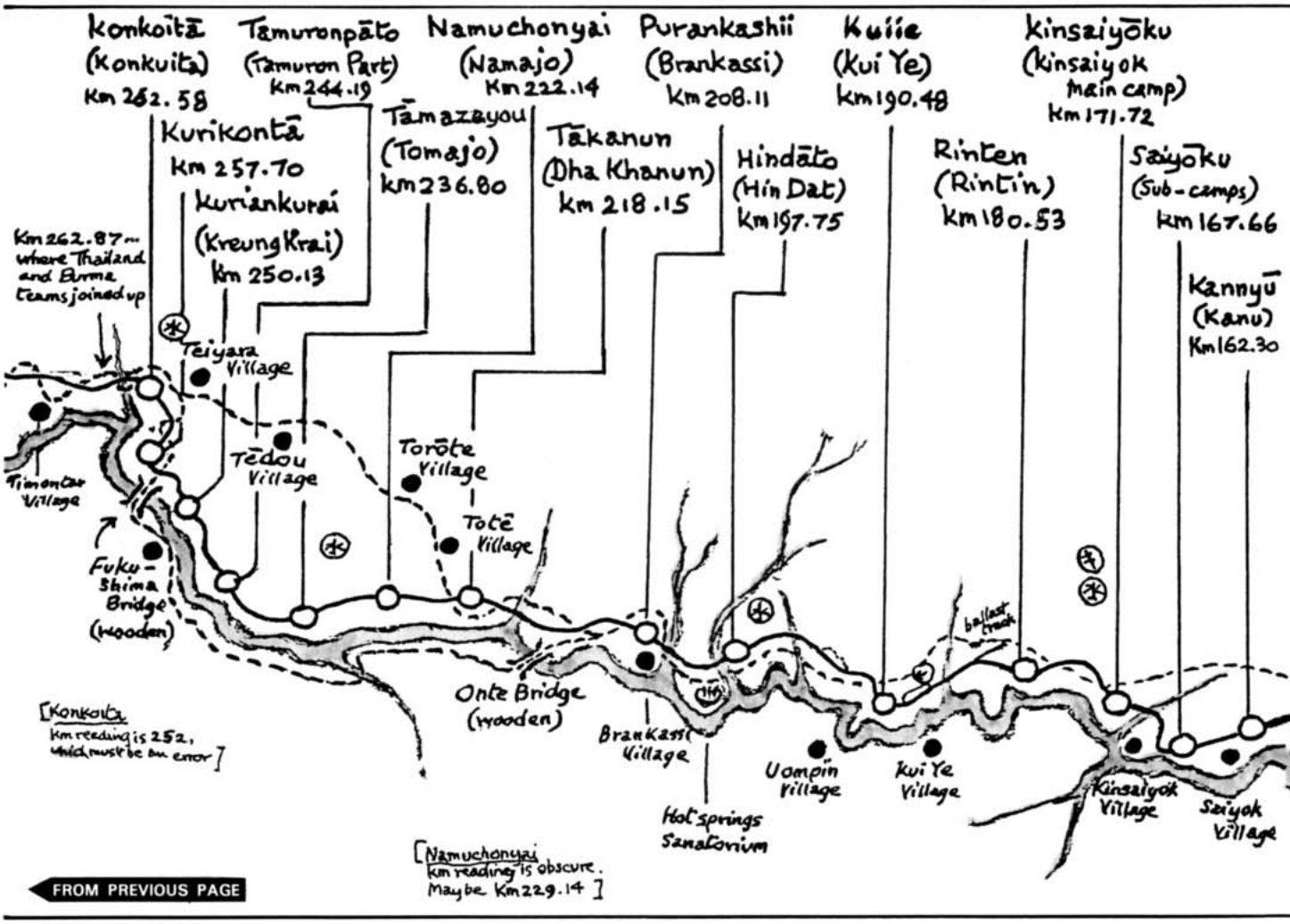
'Now that the target was behind us, we realised that survival was much more likely. We elected to fly across the Bay of Bengal, south of Rangoon. The possibility of being picked up by Allied shipping looked like a better bet than trekking through the jungle of Japanese-occupied Burma. Fortunately the aircraft held together and, after much debate, the aircraft commander decided to crash land on a wide beach after passing over friendly lines. (Even though the aircraft was demolished, the only injuries were minor ones to the tail gunner and myself.) We were picked up by Allied trucks and finally returned to our India base.'

On June 24, 1945, both the bridges, which had been repaired, were hit again by British pilots putting the railway out of commission for the remainder of the war.

After the Japanese surrender, the British Army dismantled a 3.95 kilometre stretch of track on the Burma-Thailand frontier. Although the railway had been built at great cost in human suffering its construction, when examined by post-war engineers, was not seen to be capable of sustaining commercial traffic. The 303.95 kilometres of track in Thailand were sold by the Allies to the State Railway Company for 50 million baht (£1¼ million) and, subsequently, the Thais decided to re-lay 130 kilometres of the line as far as Namtok. The remainder was considered uneconomic and gradually lifted.

The three blown sections of the steel bridge were repaired by a Japanese firm as war reparations. However, as the 22-metre spans had proved an obstacle to the huge timber rafts plying the river, the two damaged piers were removed and replaced by a single support carrying two box-girder bridge sections. This enabled the navigable gap to be increased to 33 metres. The wooden bridge, being an even worse barrier to river traffic, was completely dismantled.

The section of track from Nong Pladuk to Kanchanaburi was re-opened on June 24, 1949, the next section to Wampo on April 1, 1952 and the final part to Namtok on July 1, 1957.


Konkoita (Konkuita) Km 262.58
Tamuronpato (Tamuron Part) Km 244.19
Namuchonyai (Namajo) Km 222.14
Purankashii (Brankassi) Km 208.11
Kuiie (Kui Ye) km 190.48
Kinsaiyoku (Kinsaiyok main camp) Km 171.72
Kurikonta Km 257.70 Kuriankurai (Kreung Krai) Km 250.13
Tamazayou (Tomajo) km 236.80
Takanun (Dha Khanun) km 218.15
Hindato (Hin Dat) Km 197.75
Rinten (Rintin) km 180.53
Saiyoku (Sub-camps) km 167.66
Km 262.87 — where Thailand and Burma teams joined up
Kannyu (Kanu) Km 162.30
Teiyara Village
Tedou Village
Torote Village
Tote Village
Timontar Village
Fuku-Shima Bridge (wooden)
Onte Bridge (wooden)
Brankassi Village
Uompin Village
Kui Ye Village
Kinsaiyok Village
Saiyok Village
Hot springs Sanatorium
ballast track
[Konkoita km reading is 252, which must be an error]
[Namuchonyai km reading is obscure. Maybe Km 229.14]
FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

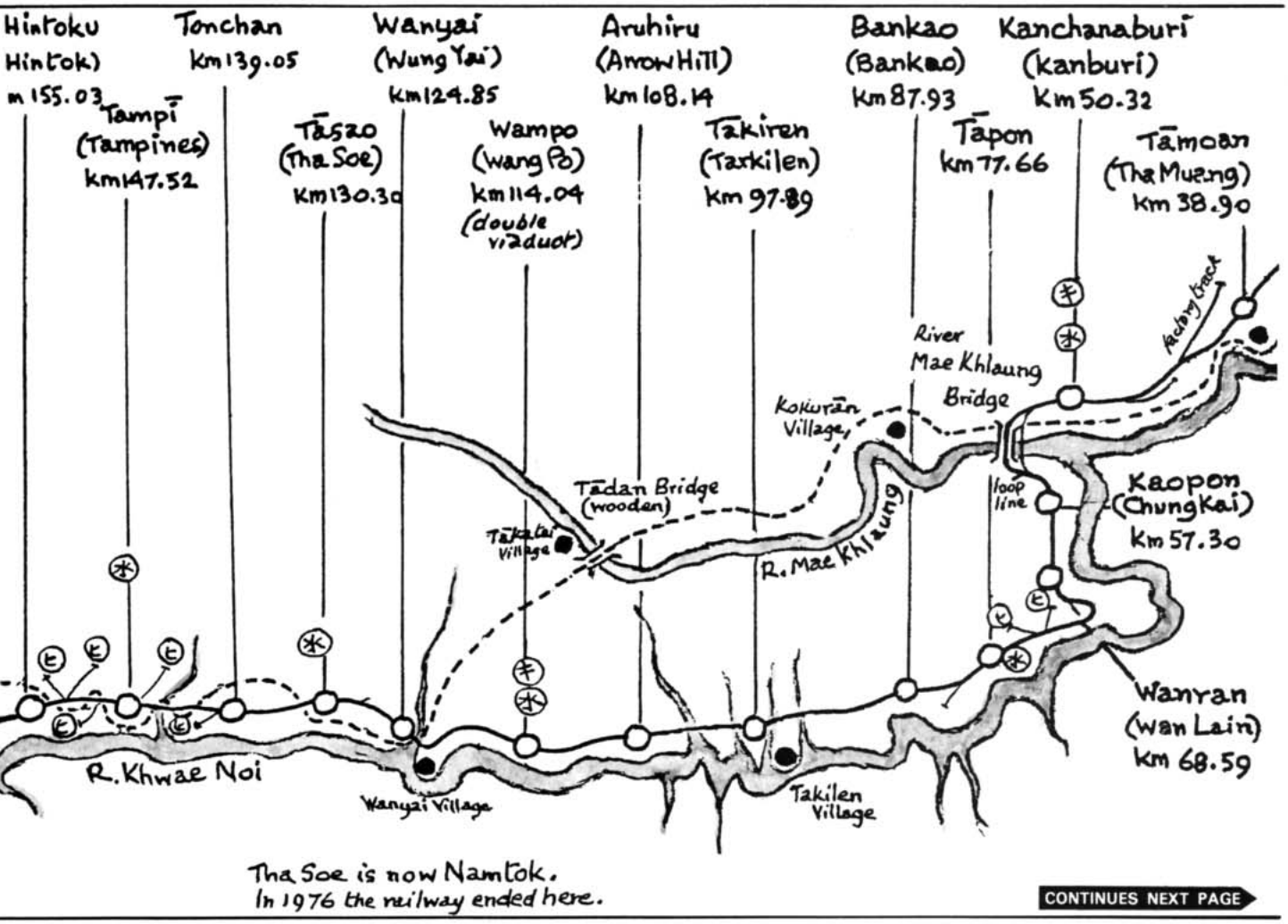
Left: **The severed steel bridge with the timber bridge in the foreground photographed in 1946 (G. P. Adams).** *Above:* **Kevin Patience's comparison from the same spot. The wooden bridge was dismantled as it was a barrier to river traffic and two wider, box-girder spans were erected to repair the present bridge.**

Two detailed maps exist of the railway today, one an official Japanese blueprint the other produced by one of the POWs who worked on the line, John C. Sharp. Naturally the Japanese version is the more accurate and has been chosen to be reproduced here. The original was obtained from an agent in the Kanchanaburi area by Tack Fee, a manager in Bangkok for the Standard Vacuum Company and was donated in 1954 to the Imperial War Museum in London by Mr. C. F. Colchester who worked on the railway from October 1942 to August 1945. The map was translated from the Japanese and re-drawn by another railway ex-POW, Captain C. E. Escritt, RASC (February 1942 - August 1945), and is reproduced here with his permission. The following passages are taken from his research into the dating of the map:

'The plan is undated. Only the main Bangkok-Singapore line is marked as a "line in operation" *(kisetsusen),* i.e., a line already constructed, already established, or already existing. Neither the Moulmein-Thanbyuzayat section of the Thailand-Burma Rail Link nor the Thanbyuzayat-Ye line is shown as a line in operation or as already constructed, and it was at first thought that, if the Moulmein-Ye line had been of comparatively recent construction, the railway engineers regarded it as "incompleted".

'The Moulmein-Ye line was in fact completed early in 1925. It was described in *Railway Gazette International* (April 3, 1925, p.488) as 89 miles long and made through difficult country with annual rainfall of 367 inches. There were 200 bridges. No roads existed and heavy material had to be conveyed up tidal creeks in country boats. The article added that "a survey of a line from Ye to Tavoy is nearly completed and will be extended to Mergui and thence to Siam by the Jalinga Pass". The issue for 1928 (p.215) carries an Indian Railway Board report of a survey from Mergui to the Siamese border.

'The line had been surveyed by 1898. On Waterlow & Sons' *Map of Burma Railways* of



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that date, the track is marked as "surveyed" with stations planned at Moulmein, Pauk, Pang, Kawdut, Taungbon and Yemyoma (terminal, i.e. Ye). From Pauk runs a "suggested" track through Ataran and Thanbaya to the Three Pagodas Pass, whence it turns west and runs through to Ye.

'Probably the first general reference to the Moulmein-Ye line is in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica,* 14th edition, 1929, in which a map of Burma shows it as an existing railway (Vol 24, p.66). See also s.v. 'Moulmein' in vol.15, p.927: "From Moulmein itself a railway runs southwards to Ye, and is being continued to Tavoy and probably to Siam". So far as is known, no extension was ever made beyond Ye.

'On the Japanese railway engineers' plan, the section of line between Thanbyuzayat and Moulmein is distorted, in order to cram it within a small compass. This factor could possibly explain why the draughtsman did not draw it as "already in operation" and, not having done so, treated the Thanbyuzayat-Ye section in the same way.

'The line from Nong Pladuk westwards is marked as "the present line" *(genzaisen),* i.e., the line now under consideration. "Work in progress" *(kojichu),* i.e., in course of construction, is marked only at Konma at Km 2.00 (where the intention is obscure) and at minor concealed tracks *(hitokusen)* running off the line at Km 139.44, Km 146.40, Km 147.77, Km 154.59 and at minor looplines *(ukaisen),* also concealed, at Km 189.76, Km 195.34 and Km 201.01.

'Some details of sidings, ballast tracks, etc., are drawn in. Two of the most elaborate at the Thai end are at Nong Pladuk and Ban Pong. They bear little resemblance to sidings actually constructed from June 1942 onwards. At Nong Pladuk, a new station on the new line is drawn in but not at the point at which the new line actually branched off. At the Moulmein end, detail is included of railway connections with jetties on the Salween and Ataran rivers. Few British POWs knew this area in detail and, unfortunately, the campaign map in Woodburn Kirby's *War Against Japan* (HMSO, 1958), vol. 2, p.34, sketch 3, "Moulmein", gives no railway detail at all except to mark one jetty as "Railway Jetty".

'Unfortunately Professor Charles Fisher, in his authoritative article in *Economic Geography* on the "The Thailand-Burma Railway" (vol. 23, No. 2, April 1947, pp 85-97), throws no light on the siting of the track itself, automobile highway, or bridges.

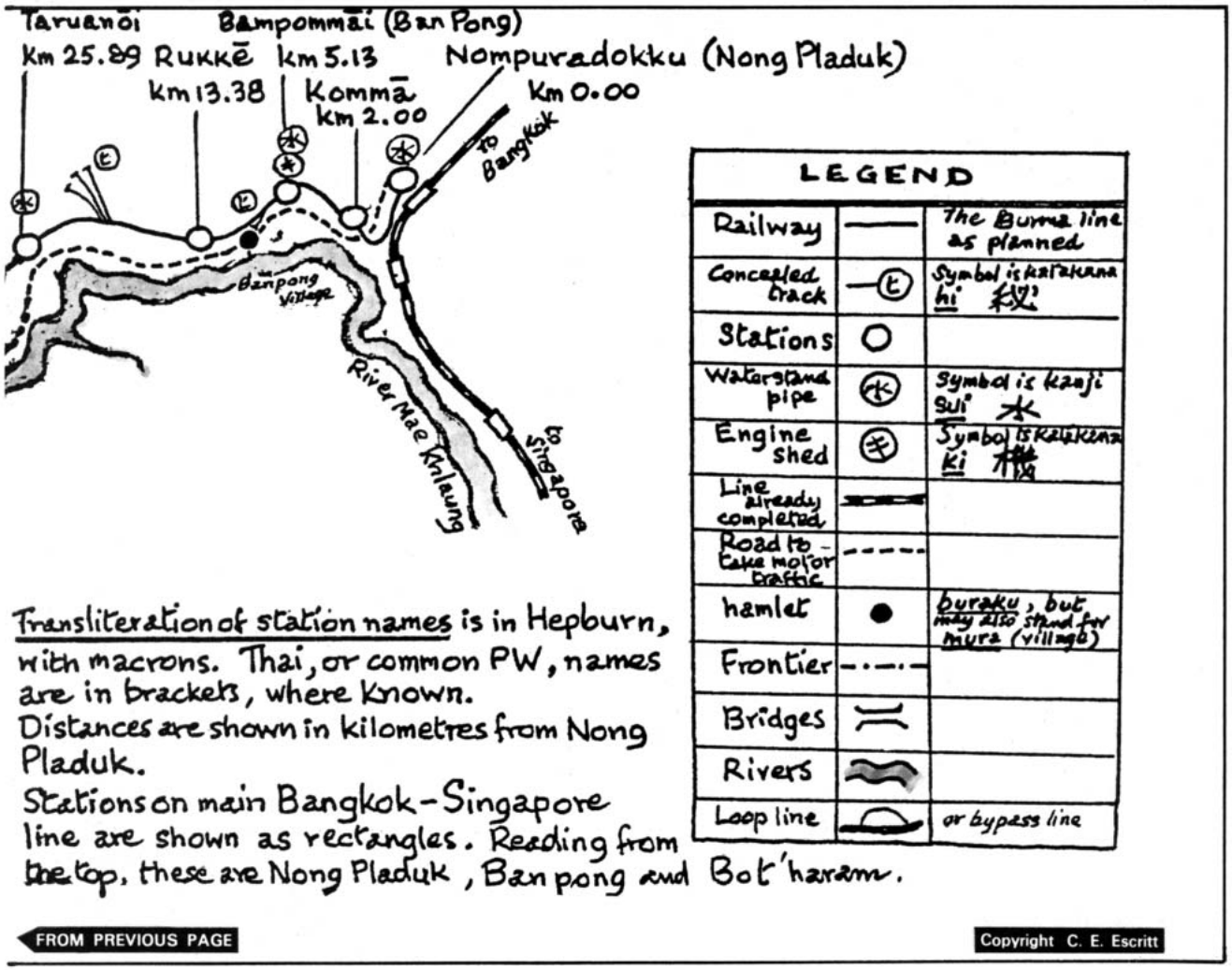
'SEATIC Bulletin No. 246, (the result of a seven-month survey on the ground by Lieutenant C. C. Brett of the Canadian I Corps in 1946) pp. 7-8, reports that preparations for construction began in June 1942, including sending out survey parties, collecting materials and assembling personnel, but that actual construction began simultaneously in November at Nong Pladuk, the southern terminus, and Thanbyuzayat, the northern terminus. In November, however, the survey of automobile highway *(jidoshadoro),* primarily a Thai responsibility (p.4), was still in progress (p.8).

'The trace must have been made within the period June-November 1942. However, it suggests that it may have been prepared after work on the automobile highway had begun. The wooden bridge carrying it over the River Kwae Noi at Km 255 is named as Fukushima Bridge, a name probably derived from an engineer unit, either military or *gunzoku,* attached civilian personnel from Fukushima-ken. The wooden bridge at Tarden over the River Mae Khlaung (also known as River Kwae Yai, the Big Kwae, as distinct from the small Kwae Noi) is, however, also drawn in. It is known that as late as late October 1942 the "automobile highway" was still a twisting jungle track from Kanchanaburi onwards and the river still had to be crossed by barge at Tardan (S.S. Pavillard, *Bamboo Doctor,* Macmillan, 1960, pp.82 and 83). Yet the wooden bridge carrying the loop line over the River Mae Khlaung at Tha Makham is not drawn in. This bridge was completed in February 1943 yet the steel bridge, completed in April 1943, is drawn in.

'These conflicting records of time and place, combining with the fact that the siding details do not accord with what was actually constructed by POW labour, suggest broadly that the trace pre-dated the actual construction of the railway. They cannot, however, pre-date it by much, if Fukushima Bridge was in fact built (or was due to be built) by an engineer unit already known to be employed on such construction in the area. But one might have supposed that the steel bridge carrying the railway, and not a wooden bridge carrying a road, would have borne the name Fukushima, a name of good omen.

'A point of interest is that the map names the station at Km 57.30 as Kaopon, the name by which in 1978 it was still known by local Thais. Yet, from late June 1942 onwards, both Japanese engineers and POWs on the job called the place Chungkai, one of the best-known place-names in the war time history of the railway.

'In an article in the August, 1977 edition of *Barbed Wire and Bamboo* (official organ of the NSW, Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia ex-POW Associations) Captain Vern Toose repeated that "due to an in-



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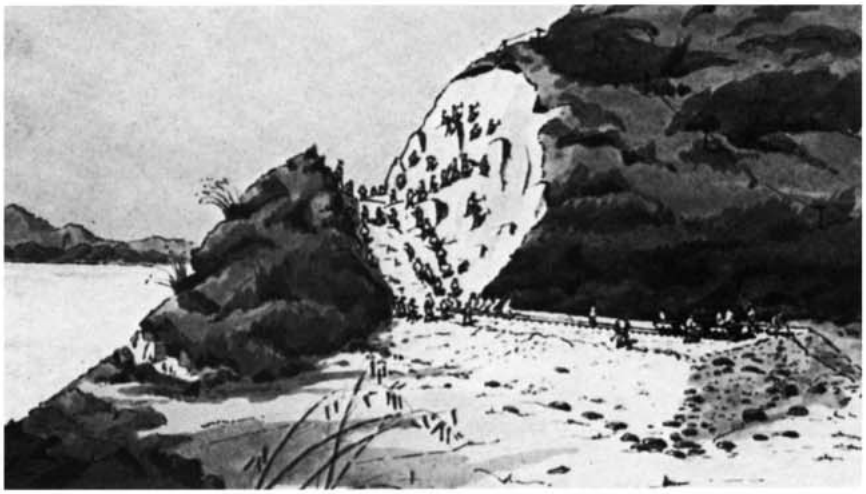
credible error by a Japanese engineer, the railway crossed the river in its present position instead of further north at a point opposite Laddya where the hill was known as Chongkai. Subsequently all maps and aerial surveys were mislabelled and the small hill across the river from Kanchanaburi was called Chonkai (correct name Khao Poon) and the bridge was built there, causing many miles of track to be built and laid in almost impossible terrain. This delayed completion and no doubt caused many lives to be unnecessarily wasted.''

'It is quite true that an obvious site for the bridge would have been Laddya (called Lat Ya on some maps, and known to POWs as Rajah from the Japanese *kana* version, *Rajya*). Laddya is a point on the automobile highway which runs north of the river from Nong Pladuk to Tardan and is a village about one-and-a-half miles east of the confluence of the tributary Ta Phoen with the Mae Khlaung. At this point hills rise very near the opposite bank of the Mae Khlaung and, after crossing the river, the railway line could have been run in a north-westerly direction after rounding these hills and so on to Tha Soe (called Tarso by POWs). Such a line would not only have been many miles shorter but would also have eliminated both the cutting west of Chungkai and the double viaduct at Wampo. The theory makes sense, not least because of its viability. In 1976, Geoffrey Pharaoh Adams found a fine, steel and concrete, two-lane bridge over the Mae Khlaung in the Laddya area, taking the paved highway on to Nam Tok (as Tha Soe is now called).

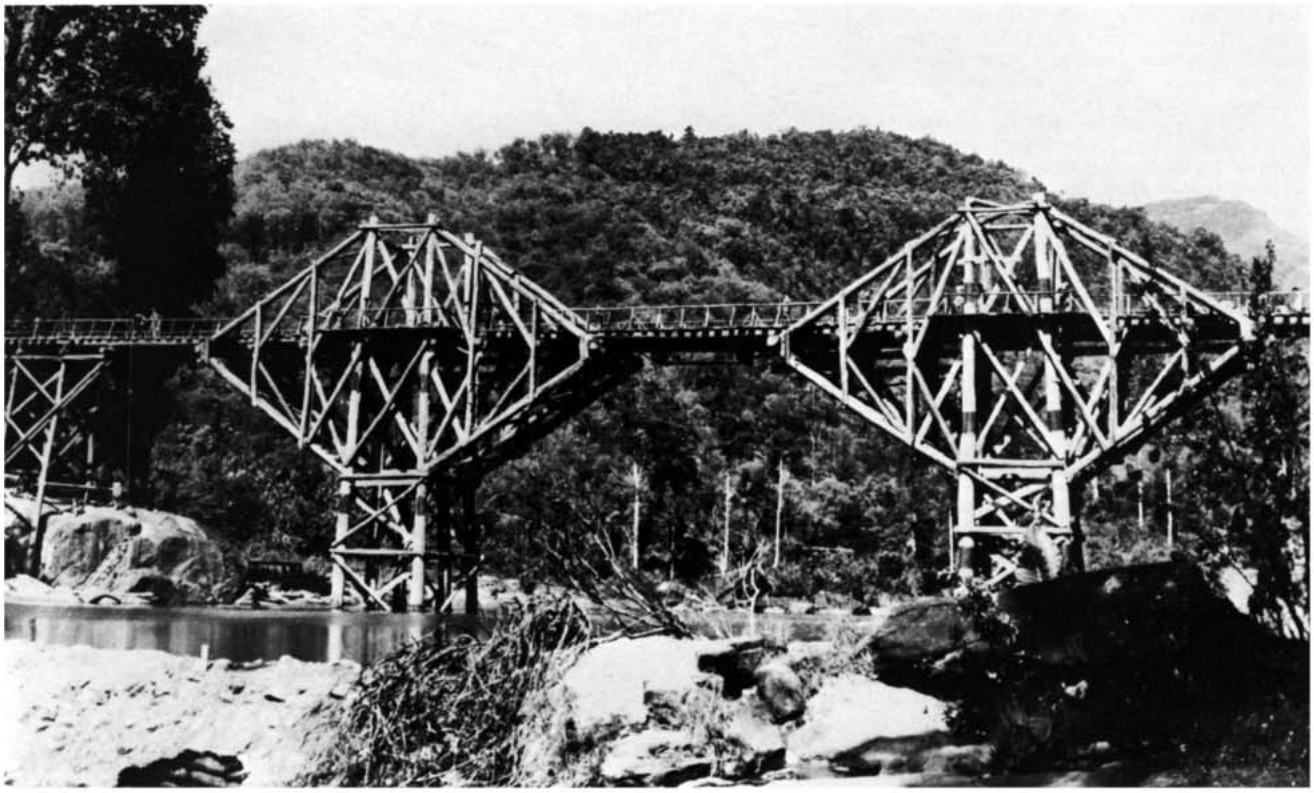
'This theory also supports the belief that the Japanese plan may predate the actual construction of the railway: had it not done so the station at Khao Poon would undoubtedly have been called Chonkai in the *kana* script.

'In *SEATIC Bulletin No. 246* is evidence of Japanese incompetence in dealing with surveys. The diary of Sergeant H. Jones, Royal Signals, is quoted on p.27: ''In the last week of

Below: **The first of the two viaducts at Wampo. It is now believed that both the viaducts and the Chungkai cutting were needlessly constructed due to a map reading error by the Japanese engineers.**



Above: **A contemporary drawing by Lieutenant Roy Pennison, ex-Reconnaissance Corps, of the construction of the Chungkai cutting.** *Below:* **Thirty-six years after its construction by POWs using primitive tools, the cutting still flanks the modern railway.**



Reputed to be the film industry's largest and most expensive single prop at over $250,000, this was the 425ft bridge which took over a year to build over the Kelani river at Kitulgala, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in 1956. As there could be no re-takes of the destruction of the bridge, producer Sam Spiegel gave the demolition job to experts of ICI. Ten tons of explosive were used — fifty times the quantity the actors are seen placing on the screen! The final scene was filmed by six cameras, one aboard the train itself. The rails were cut at either end to ensure that the train was not suspended in mid-air. Gamini Pieris, a 57-year-old Ceylonese leukemia victim, had offered to die in this scene driving the train across the bridge as it was blown up. His offer was refused and a stunt man drove the train a quarter of the way onto the bridge before running back hidden from the cameras by the coaches. The exposed film was sent in separate shipments to London and Hollywood to reduce the possibility of loss to the precious footage.

January 1943 all work on the railway ceased owing to the Japanese surveyors having made miscalculations which would cause the ends of the railway working towards each other to miss by about 1 kilometre.'' In the same diary, on p.27, the old civilian survey is referred to: ''The Japanese seemed to be following an old trail, marking which was an old earth-return telephone wire. This, we learned, was built by a firm that had attempted to build a railway some years before and had given up owing to the seeming impossibility of the project.'' And again, p.28: ''In May 1943 I caught sight of a Japanese map of the railway and marked on it was an old route that a Japanese sergeant said had been surveyed by some company years before. Our route followed this old one except in one or two places.''

'It is tempting to guess that 'one or two places' included the Lat Ya section which in error became the Tha Makham section.

'The formal decision by *Daihonei,* Imperial GHQ in Tokyo, to build the *taimen rensetsu tetsudo* was taken on June 20, 1942, and orders to start were passed to the Southern Army railway engineer unit in August. Yet on June 24, 1942, Major Sykes' 'B' Battalion began work at the Thailand end at Nong Pladuk on construction of base workshops and stores for the Thailand-Burma Rail Link. From evidence considered earlier, the Japanese map was probably drawn in early November 1942.'

On October 2, 1957 the world premier was held in London of the film *The Bridge over the River Kwai* which, although fictional, served to focus worldwide attention on this remote corner of Thailand. Although the film title was incorrect (there never was a bridge constructed over the Kwae Noi which means 'little Kwae') the locals, not wanting to disappoint the booming tourist trade created by the movie, soon adopted the little-used name of Kwae Yai (Big Kwae) for the Mae Khlaung. Thus there is now a bridge over the River Kwae! (Pierre Boulle, author of the book on which the film was based, even had to write a further book *The Source of the River Kwai* to explain why he wrote the fictional one.)

Sunday, October 17, 1976 saw a controversial reunion between Allied ex-POWs and their former Japanese guards to mark the 33rd anniversary of the opening of the railway. It was the first time that men from the two former adversaries had met together and for some it was too much too soon and the event was boycotted by the British Far East Prisoners-of-War Association. Only one Briton attended, a former foreign correspondent and ex-Captain in the Stafford Regiment, the other fifty-two participants coming from America, Australia and Japan.

Today one can visit and ride over the track which could be considered a unique living memorial to the thousands who died on its construction and who still lie buried in the three cemeteries along the route, and to the countless others who have no known grave and lie undiscovered in the luxuriant jungle undergrowth. One of our readers, Kevin Patience, recently visited Thailand and travelled on the line from Nong Pladuk to Namtok. This is his guide for a trip to the Death Railway today, illustrated with photographs taken along the route.

'One scene that was not in the film' as the Daily Telegraph captioned this picture of former enemies meeting at the bridge in October 1976.

Guide to the Death Railway

BY KEVIN PATIENCE

To see all the sights of the railway can at first seem an impossible task — hence the reason that the average visitor is quite happy to settle with a look at the bridge, cemetery and perhaps a trip to the end of the line. However the following has been written for those who would like to see a little more than the guide book mentions.

There are a number of ways of seeing the railway. Day trips by bus are organised by a number of travel agents from Bangkok to the River Kwae. The trip includes a visit to the cemetery at Kanchanaburi and the bridge over the river at Tha Makham continuing either by bus or train to Namtok, the present end of the line, and lunching at the River Kwae Village Hotel before returning to Bangkok with a stop at Nakhon Pathom to see the Pagoda. This however is a lightning trip and does very little to convey the background to the railway.

Two other two to three-day excursions are also advertised. First one can stay over at the Kwae Village Hotel which is a pleasant lodge set on the river's edge some miles beyond Nam Tok. While staying at the lodge a trip can be taken along the line crossing the wooden viaducts at Wang Po as well as seeing the cemetery and bridge. The second excursion involves a trip up the river from the bridge passing the Kwae village hotel and staying at the River Kwae Rafts — a number of well-appointed thatched cottages on rafts. From here it is possible to take a boat and explore the disused parts of the line in the jungle alongside the river. Further alternative accommodation is provided by the first class River Kwae Hotel at Kanchanaburi, an ideal stopping off point for those who wish to visit the bridge and surrounding areas.

Thai State Railways run weekend excursion trains to Namtok from Bangkok leaving early on Saturday and Sunday morning. The train stops at Nakhom Pathom for a visit to the Pagoda, the largest in Thailand. This dominates the town being just over three hundred feet high, a familiar landmark to those POWs in the camp there. After a forty-minute stop the train continues on its way to Tha Makham branching off the main Bangkok-Singapore line between Nong Pladuk and Ban Pong. A half-hour stop for refreshments is made at the bridge before proceeding to Nam Tok. Transport is laid on to Kinsaiyok Main waterfall, also once the site of a camp, for a picnic lunch (remember to take your own). After a lunch break, the train heads back to Bangkok stopping at Kanchanaburi for a visit to the cemetery, arriving back around 7.30 p.m. A very worthwile trip but one that requires advance booking because of its popularity; at 45 baht (just over £1.00) it is definitely the best value of all.

Above: **The first Japanese train arrives at Singapore station.** *Below:* **Starting point for Kevin's own tour to the Burma-Siam railway thirty-six years later.**

The beginning of the 'Death Railway' — the main line continues on the left.

The 'Death Railway' branches off the main line half-way between Nong Pladuk, once the main marshalling yard and camp, and Ban Pong — then a small village but now a sprawling township. From here the line runs across a flat plain currently under extensive sugar-cane cultivation with only small earth works and a few minor bridges until it reaches Kanchanaburi — the site of the Japanese Railway HQ and the large POW camp. Approaching the town by road, a small notice board reads 'Jeath Museum'. This is run by Buddist monks in the grounds of a temple alongside the river and is housed in bamboo huts similar to those built during the construction days. Admission is 50p. The two main huts house a large collection of contemporary photographs, paintings and relics recovered from along the line. It is well worth a visit if only to see the paintings which depict the life and conditions in a very graphic manner. One particular item on display is an Army greatcoat exchanged for food during the early days. (Geoffrey Adams recalls that when a recent visitor pointed out to one of the monks that the spelling of 'DEATH' was incorrect the monk replied, 'No, You're wrong. J is for Japan, E for England, A for Australia and America, T for Thailand and H for Holland).

Further along the main road on the left is the main Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery where 6,982 lie buried. Many of these are from graves along the lines as far as Nikke near the Burma border which were recovered by the Army Graves Service after the war. Beautifully maintained, a wide grass path leads from the entrance building to the Cross of Sacrifice and to a seat at the far boundary. The Cross stands where this path intersects an avenue of Burmese pink cassias running from the Stone of Remembrance at the north-western boundary to a simple memorial shelter on the opposite side. The shelter, like the entrance, is built of concrete blocks faced with chippings of local stone. In it, panels of Portland stone bear the names of 300 soldiers who perished in an epidemic at Nikke Camp and whose ashes now lie buried in two graves in the cemetery.

The graves are marked by bronze plaques on concrete blocks set in borders of white and blue angelonia, Michaelmas daisies, golden rod, zephyranthes and many other plants. Behind the rows are borders of flowering shrubs, including acalypha, croton, gardenia and yellow and red hibiscus. Ixora, an evergreen with clusters of red flowers, is used at the ends of the rows. Local varieties of red and pink roses grow well in the cemetery. Among the trees which shade the graves are lagerstroemias and mangoes, and the site is bounded by 'flamboyant' and rain trees and a hedge of hibiscus.

Above: **Early post-war view of the Army Graves Service cemetery at Kanchanaburi (G. P. Adams).** *Below:* **The cemetery was handed over to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in May 1948 and reconstruction completed by the mid-fifties.**

In the entrance building a bronze tablet records the names of eleven soldiers of the army of undivided India whose graves, situated elsewhere in Thailand, could not be maintained. Above the bronze door of the box containing the Register of the names of those buried in the cemetery, there is a bronze panel bearing the words:

'In honoured remembrance of the fortitude and sacrifice of that valiant company who perished while building the railway from Thailand to Burma during their long captivity. Those who have no known grave are commemorated by name at Rangoon, Singapore and Hong Kong and their comrades rest in the three war cemeteries of Kanchanaburi, Chungkai and Thanbyuzayat.'

I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the Lord.

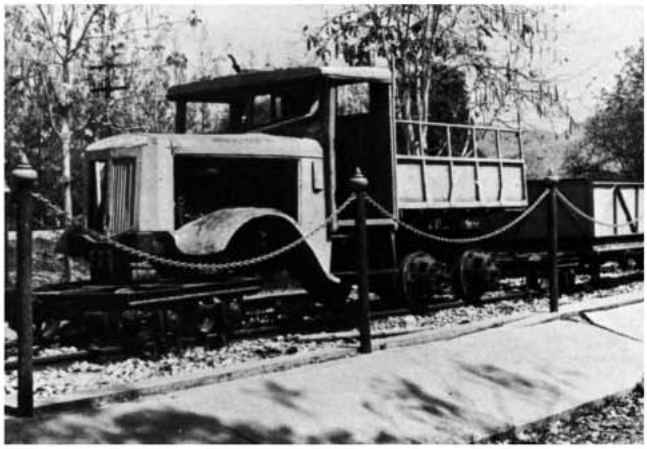
Above: **The site of the Japanese railway HQ at Kanchanaburi.** *Below:* **The remains of the cutting which originally took the railway down to the wooden bridge.**

On the opposite side of the road, in a now-empty field, stood the Japanese HQ.

Leaving Kanchanaburi by train, the line runs parallel with the main road eventually sweeping round in a left-hand curve to cross it before reaching the bridge. Almost immediately after the railway crosses the road one can see the remains of the embankment and ballast which took the original line down to the original wooden bridge which was dismantled after the war.

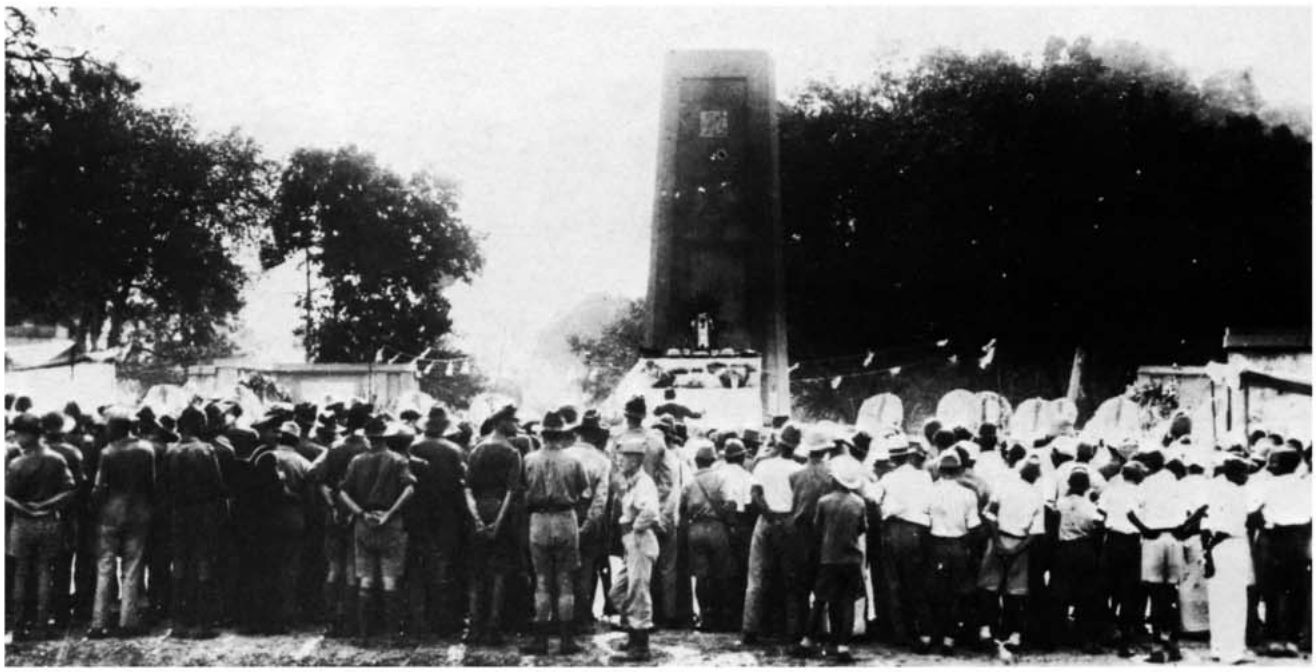
At Tha Makham, where the bridge crosses the River Kwae, are a number of interesting sites. The present bridge, opened in 1943, is naturally the major attraction and is in daily use by trains, pedestrians and motor-cyclists. Two square spans replace three semi-eliptical ones destroyed by Allied bombing in 1945. Bomb splinter damage can be seen on the pillars, now repaired with cement filling and also in the rails about thirty feet from the end of the bridge. Walking across the bridge is an interesting experience in that pedestrians and cyclists battle for right of way until the arrival of a train when all thoughts of precedence vanish and all concerned clear the bridge to stand on the platforms provided for this purpose. On the far side, the last six spans are of box girder construction and are ironically marked 'Made in Japan'. Turning left at the end of the bridge down a small track, a slight hump is noticeable. This was part of the embankment that carried the railway from the wooden bridge to join up with the present line.

Next to the restaurant, where an excellent booklet *The Thailand to Burma Railway* by Geoffrey Adams can be obtained (copies of this booklet are available by post, price 73 pence direct from G. P. Adams, South Edge, 139 Banks Road, Sandbanks, Poole, Dorset BH13 7QQ) stand two preserved steam locomotives, neither of which were used during the construction but however saw service on the line post-war. Behind one of them stands a Japanese diesel-engined road/rail truck that was used for shuttle work on the line.



Japanese road-rail truck with six-cylinder air cooled diesel engine.

Nicely restored Japanese locomotive used on the line post-war.



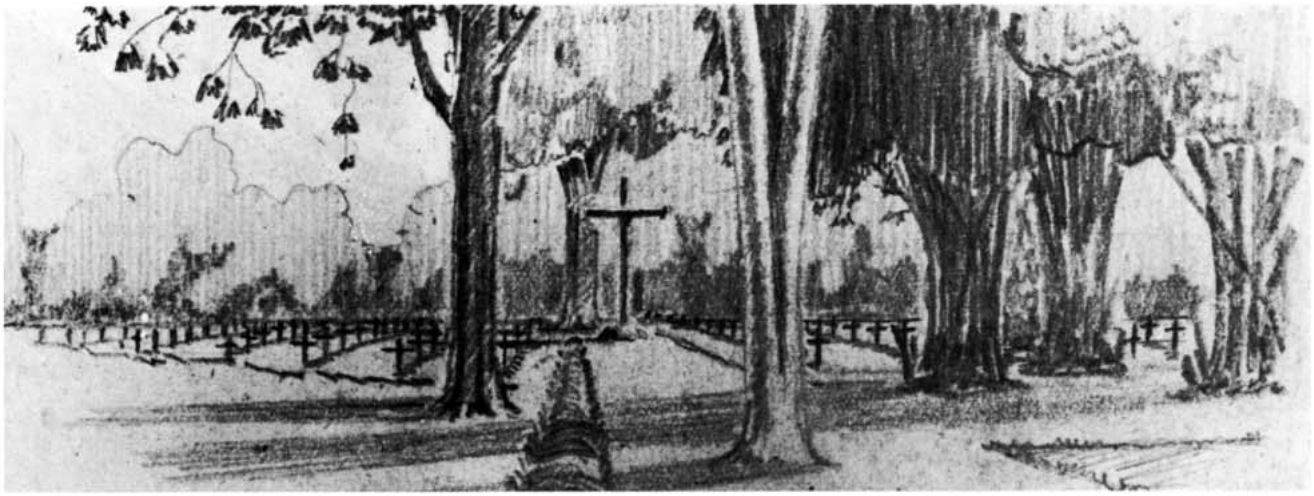
The controversial memorial erected in 1944. Today a nearby notice, erected by the Japanese Association in Thailand, proclaims: 'This monument was erected by the Japanese Army during World War II in memory of the personnel of the Allied forces and the nationals of the many countries who had helped in the construction of the Thailand-Burma Railway and had died through illness during the course of the construction. Once a year in March, the Japanese residents in Thailand assemble here in a ceremony to commemorate this memorial' (Australian War Memorial 118788).

Walking along the road away from the bridge reveals a concrete pillar set on a large plinth with four corner buttresses. This is the controversial memorial erected by the Japanese in March 1944 to the POWs who died during the construction. On the opposite side of the road, behind the wooden house, can be seen the partially-filled cutting that took the line on to the wooden bridge which spanned the river directly behind the modern building which now houses a jeweller. Only a few stumps are occasionally visible to mark the site. To the right of the cutting can be seen a large open expanse, partially under cultivation; this was the site of the main camp by the bridge, although no traces remain except an occasional cement block possibly from a fence post.

While at Tha Makham, a visit to Chungkai cemetery should be made via a twenty-minute ride by the boats that are a unique part of Thailand. Resembling long flat-bottomed punts, driven by a petrol or diesel engine mounted on a swivel and driving the propeller via a long stern tube, they are often referred to as long-tailed boats. As there appears to be a strong disbelief in silencers, the accompanying noise is shattering but an experience not to be missed.

The cemetery was started by the POWs since this was the site of one of the major camps and hospitals. Laid out in the same

Site of the POW camp by the bridge. Only little concrete markers remain.



manner as Kanchanaburi, it is a quiet secluded spot about 200 yards from the river. From the landing stage a footpath, shaded by a line of 'flamboyant' trees, leads to the entrance on the eastern side of the cemetery located in a bamboo jungle clearing. Here, beyond a paved forecourt, is a shelter built of concrete blocks, faced with chippings of local stone, and roofed with tiles of a light, warm brown, such as are used on temples in Thailand. A long central avenue runs from the Stone of Remembrance, just inside the cemetery, to the Cross of Sacrifice, which stands against a background of purple bauhinias. The graves are marked by bronze plaques and have flower borders of roses, ixoras, gardenias, galphimias and angelonias. They are shaded by lines of lagerstroemia, a tree with panicles of mauve flowers resembling the 'candles' of the horse-chestnut. Other trees growing in the cemetery include tamarind and the fragrant champac. Along the northern and southern boundaries are lines of *Gliricidia sepium,* strikingly beautiful in bloom, when their long, arching branches bear clusters of pink flowers. The boundary hedge is of hibiscus.

Here lie 1,329 men from the United Kingdom, six from India, 42 from Malaya and 313 Dutch soldiers and sailors. There are 50 unknown graves. Beyond the river the steep, tree-covered hills are reminiscent of oriental paintings. No road comes near the cemetery and no traffic disturbs its peace. It is difficult to believe that what is now history ever took place in such an area, so serene are the surroundings. The area outside the cemetery is now cultivated and no traces of the camp remain except for one large drainage ditch.

Boarding the train once again, a slow crossing of the bridge is made before gathering speed and heading for Nam Tok. The alignment is to say the least something of a switch-back with what appears to be impossible gradients and corners. During the construction days, many failures occurred when the locomotives, designed for coal burning but wood-fired, were unable to negotiate these severe gradients.

Shortly after leaving Tha Makham, the line passes through the Chungkai cutting, the first of the major earthworks followed by a second, smaller one and finally a large embankment which took a huge toll of lives and was the scene of a non-stop, thirty-hour working shift. As the train proceeds northwards, the countryside becomes hillier and the vegetation begins to take on a jungle appearance as the line runs along the valley of the Kwae Noi. Large areas of the trackside which were dense bush at the time of construction are now under cultivation. The line winds its way past many small stations that have a familiar ring to their names as almost all were construction camp sites.

Above: **Sketch by G. S. Gimson of Chungkai cemetery as it was in 1944. Below: The unusual tree forms a comparison point for the same view today.**

The second and smaller of the two cuttings at Chungkai.

The train approaches the second viaduct clinging to the rockface at Wampo.

After Lum Sum, the line runs alongside the river and approaches the Wang Po viaducts — precariously built out of the hillside and, although extensively rebuilt, still retaining their primitive appearance. Once again the train slows to a crawl and the timbers and rails groan and screech with its passing. The amount of the rock removed to construct this part of the line is incredible as the scar on the hillside indicates.

After passing the two main viaducts, the train crosses two smaller ones before arriving in Nam Tok. Beyond Nam Tok station a solitary set of buffers marks the end of the line. Only a mound of ballast and occasional sleepers leading off into the bush indicate where the line continued. Walking along the ballast for a hundred yards reveals a fairly complete viaduct constructed from sleepers piled in a tier and, further along near the

End of the line in 1979 at Nam Tok, the new name for Tha Soe on the Japanese map.

The first wooden viaduct at Wampo, reconstructed after the war but still retaining its former makeshift appearance.

The second of the two double-pillared elevated viaducts about half-a-mile beyond the buffers.

main road, a second larger one with two pillars of tiered sleepers. Both are in use as foot bridges. After this the line disappears under cultivation for some distance.

However, for those whose interest and time permits, a trip to Kinsaiyok Main waterfall is worthwhile. Shortly before reaching the waterfall down a dusty road, a small track crosses from left to right marking the route of the railway. A short walk reveals a trail of ballast leading off to the left which was once a siding at the far end of which are concrete foundations of what may have been a locoshed.

It is possible to hire a boat at the falls and, with the help of an interpreter, find more traces of the railway even further up stream. One such site proved to be of great interest. In the midst of the bamboo forest we found the remains of the main line with numerous sleepers and ballast, sidings, the base of a water crane and a loco inspection pit. Further on were the remains of a viaduct surrounded by a number of bomb craters. The sleepers have lasted intact for many, if not all, were of teak. Some still retain the securing spikes marked F.M.S.R. (Federated Malayan State Railway) since much of the Thailand side of the line was brought in from Malaya. This part of the trip is an arduous undertaking in the heat and humidity and gives rise to the thoughts of those who worked in this climate under such punishing conditions constructing a railway that was probably one of the greatest examples of man's inhumanity to man.

One other 'Death Railway' cemetery must be mentioned, located at the northern end of the line in Burma. The village of Thanbyuzayat lies about forty miles south of Moulmein and fifteen miles south-east of Amherst. Its name means 'little resting-place', and it is recorded that here, many years ago, some devout Buddhist built a pleasant resting-place with a wooden floor and corrugated iron roof for the use of travellers on the road — then a rough clearing through the jungle — from Moulmein to Amherst.

Thanbyuzayat was the Burmese terminus of the line and the first prisoners to work on this part of the railway arrived at Thanbyuzayat at the end of September 1942 and established a base camp and hospital; before long work camps stretched out from Thanbyuzayat into the jungle. Besides the many sick who died there were numerous casualties among the prisoners during three raids by Allied bombers in March and June 1943. Because of the raids the camp was evacuated in June 1943 and the prisoners, including the sick, were sent to other camps along the line. However, Thanbyuzayat continued to be used for some time as a reception centre for prisoners arriving to work on the railway.

After the war the Army Graves Service laid out Thanbyuzayat War Cemetery, bringing in many dead from camp burial grounds and isolated places along the line between Moulmein and Nikke. In addition to the 3,149 British and Commonwealth graves there are 622 graves of men of the Netherlands Forces.

The cemetery lies at the foot of the Taungnyo hills. The plots of graves are widely spaced, radiating from a garden laid out in a half circle on the northern side. Here an entrance has been built; wrought-iron gates are set in a tall pergola which links twin shelters of ashlar and rubble masonry. Along this northern boundary is a line of *Mesua ferrea,* or ironwood, a handsome evergreen with fragrant white flowers and young leaves of deep crimson. The Stone of Remembrance

The waterfall at Kinsaiyok Main, well known to POWs who bathed here as a welcome respite from their labours. Some camps had an eighty per cent death rate.

Teak sleepers still in place found by Kevin in the bamboo forest beyond Kinsaiyok.

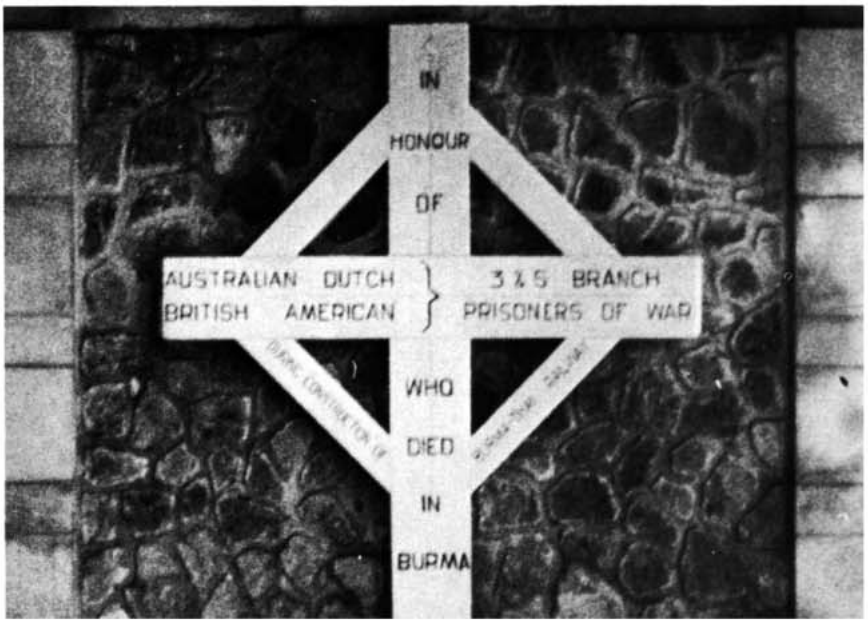
The remains of what could have been an engine shed with an inspection pit in the centre.

Kevin Patience examines the base of a water crane beside the dismantled main line in the same area.

stands on a lawn surrounded by beds of flowering shrubs and Burmese pink cassia. Groups of flowering trees have been planted within the cemetery and on three sides a belt of trees brought from the jungle has been established. The photograph was taken from beneath one of these jungle trees, a *Pterocarpus macrocarpus*. The hedge is of hibiscus.

The graves are marked by bronze plaques set in concrete blocks and their flower borders are planted with Dutch varieties of floribunda roses, propagated from stock sent out from the Netherlands. Everything planted in the cemetery has been propagated in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's nursery, which lies beyond the hedge at the far end of the cemetery, not far from the Cross of Sacrifice. The Cross is on the site originally occupied by a wooden cross made by prisoners of war from railway sleepers. This historic relic is carefully preserved in the entrance building; below it is a bronze plaque bearing these words:

'This cross was made and set up in this cemetery where the Cross of Sacrifice now stands by men held prisoner during the years 1942-1945 and is preserved here as witness to their faith and fortitude.'



Français, veillez à votre poste de radio

LES Allemands veulent à tout prix et par tous les moyens empêcher les Alliés de maintenir un lien avec les patriotes français.

Déjà en Norvège, en Pologne, en Grèce et en Hollande ils ont confisqué les postes récepteurs de T.S.F., malgré l'importance qu'ils attachent à leurs propres émissions.

Cette mesure n'est pas encore appliquée en France ; elle peut l'être d'un moment à l'autre.

A l'heure actuelle il importe plus que jamais que les patriotes français restent en contact par radio avec leurs Alliés.

Une fois la confiscation déclarée, les Allemands séviront impitoyablement contre les auditeurs clandestins.

Donc, ne disséminez les nouvelles qu'entre personnes sûres.

Méfiez-vous des mouchards. Ne discutez des nouvelles en public qu'avec la plus grande prudence.

Là où le brouillage rend l'écoute très difficile, organisez-vous pour recevoir les émissions de la B.B.C. en Morse. Ces émissions sont faites tous les jours à destination de la France à 03h 30 sur 261 mètres, 49 mètres et 41 mètres.

Organisez dès maintenant des groupes d'écoute, comprenant au moins un technicien de la radio.

Afin d'avoir la possibilité d'écouter un très grand nombre d'émissions de la B.B.C., ayez dans chaque groupe au moins une personne connaissant une ou plusieurs langues étrangères.

Ne croyez pas que vous dépasserez votre consommation déclarée d'électricité. Un poste à 5 lampes ne consomme pas davantage de courant qu'une lampe d'éclairage normale.

Agissez dès maintenant pour garder vos moyens d'écoute. Votre poste de radio est une arme dont on ne peut exagérer l'importance.

VOIR AU VERSO QUELQUES RECOMMANDATIONS IMPORTANTES.

LA B.B.C.

HEURES DES EMISSIONS (Heure française)	LONGUEURS D'ONDES (en mètres)
00.30	1.500, 261, 49, 41 et 31
01.30	1.500, 373, 285, 261, 49, 41 et 31
03.30 (en morse)	261, 49, 41
06.30	1.500, 373, 49, 41 et 31
07.30	1.500, 373, 49, 41 et 31
08.30, 09.30	1.500, 373, 49, 41 et 31
12.30	1.500, 373, 41, 31 25, 19 et 16
13.30, 15.30	1.500, 373, 41, 31, 25 et 16
19.30	373, 49, 41, 31 et 25
21.15	1.500, 373, 49, 41, 31 et 25
L'AMERIQUE S'ADRESSE AU PEUPLE DE FRANCE	
14.30	1.500, 373, 41, 31, 25 et 16
23.30	49, 41 et 31

SOE OPERATION PIMENTO

This story is largely based on a report written in 1944 by Squadron Leader Frank C. Griffiths, a pilot in the Special Operations Executive's No. 138 Squadron based at Tempsford, Bedfordshire. The operation to drop supplies to the Pimento Maquis circuit on August 14/15, 1943 was just one of twelve missions mounted that night by the squadron over France. Organised at the last minute, it was not given a mission number and is not even recorded in the Squadron records. Of the twelve Halifaxes which took off that night, all returned safely to base — all that is except serial JD180. In April, 1979 our author, Jean Paul Pallud, organised a fascinating 'then and now' tour in which Frank Griffiths returned to the main locations in his report and retraced the route of his subsequent escapes.

BY JEAN PAUL PALLUD

The Mission

The Special Operations Executive (SOE) was created in July 1940 as soon as the German victory in western Europe was evident. The War Office, and particularly Winston Churchill himself, had realised that an efficient and cheap way of upsetting the German war machine would be to help the inhabitants of the occupied countries.

The RAF had seconded for SOE missions two squadrons: No. 138 and No. 161, both operating from the secret base of Tempsford in Bedfordshire. These squadrons flew mainly on two kinds of missions:

1) 'Pick-up' i.e. to land agents in occupied territory or bring them back to England. These missions were usually carried out by Lysanders or Hudsons.

2) 'Air drops' to deliver by parachute agents, weapons and supplies for the Maquisard groups. These missions were first flown by Whitleys and later Stirlings and Halifaxes.

By 1944, the detachment of two squadrons for these activities was strongly criticized, particularly by Bomber Command, arguing that the aircraft and crews would be of better use in the bombing effort. At this time, the story of Frank Griffiths was presented by Lord Selborne to the War Cabinet as a plea for the SOE:

SECRET WAR CABINET
WP (44) 561
9th October 1944
IN THE MAQUIS
Memorandum by the Minister of Economic Warfare

I attach a report received from Squadron Leader F. C. Griffiths last year, which for various reasons I did not circulate to my colleagues at the time. It is, however, such good reading that I think it would be a pity if it were buried in our files. It also has a political bearing now as it illustrates the feelings of the French people for the British; and particularly for the RAF during the years of eclipse.

The proposed mission was twofold: first the dropping of supplies to a Marquisard group in the Annecy region of France and, secondly, the dropping of explosives to another group near Modane.

The first part of the mission was arranged by the Intelligence Service representative in Annecy, M. Yves Raisin together with Mr. Farrel, officially a low-grade agent at the British Consulate in Geneva but in fact the head of British Intelligence in that part of Switzerland. Fifteen containers carried inside the bomb-bay were filled with weapons, munitions, food, clothes and money.

The second part of the mission was to deliver explosives for the destruction of the strategically important railway tunnel between France and Italy at Modane. The explosives were contained in four packages, mounted inside the fuselage on launching rollers so that they could be released to roll down an incline through a hole in the bottom of the aircraft. These explosives were supposed to be placed inside the railway tunnel by Marquisards; the failure in the delivery of explosives necessitated the RAF to take over the mission as a bombing operation. Hundreds of aircraft pounded the valley but without a real success: the town was destroyed but the tunnel suffered little.

The leaflet reproduced at the top of the page was carried by Halifax JD180 on August 14, 1943 to be dropped to help divert attention from the real purpose of the flight.

The Flight

Due to a shortage of air-crew in No. 138 Squadron, this mission was handed to Squadron Leader Frank Griffiths using a scratch crew. Although some of the men had flown together before, they had never operated as a team, being left over from other crews who had completed their tours. Pilot Officer R. Mackenzie came along 'for the trip' as his own skipper was sick. As these seven men were not used to working together, the missing co-ordination may have been partly responsible for the disaster which followed. The complete crew comprised:

Squadron Leader Frank Griffiths, captain of the aircraft.

Flying Officer S. J. Congdon, First Navigator.

Pilot Officer R. A. Mackenzie, Bomb Aimer, Relief Navigator.

Flight Sergeant R. W. Peters, Wireless Operator.

Sergeant J. Maden, Despatcher/Gunner.

Flight Sergeant F. Pollard, Rear Gunner.

Sergeant F. R. Davies, Flight Engineer.

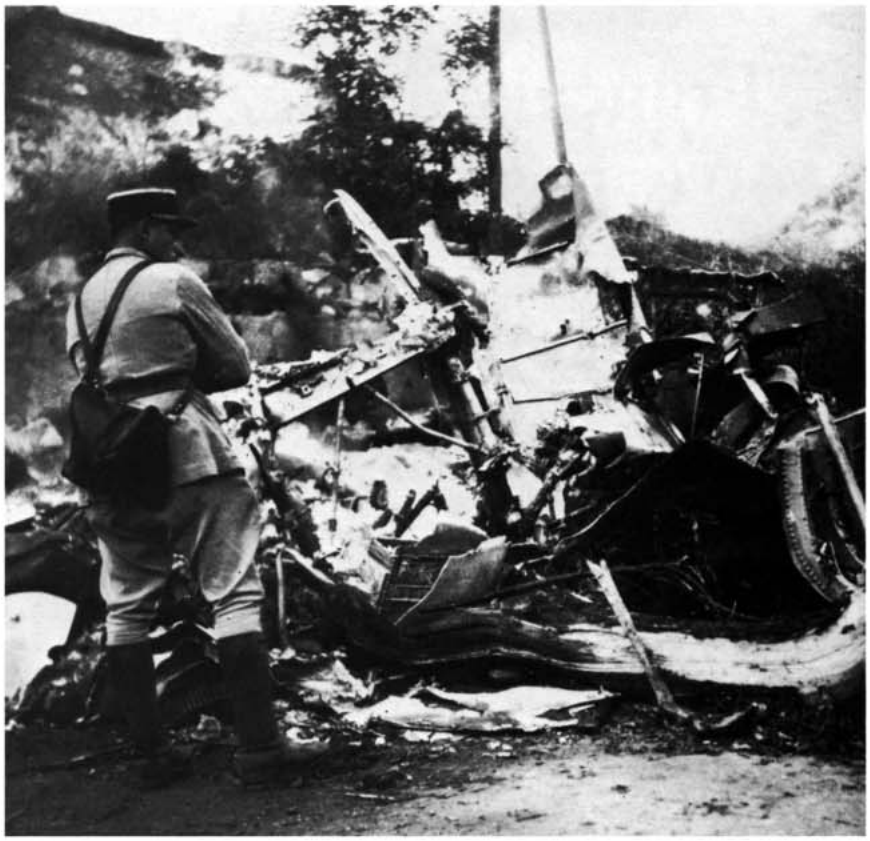
The Halifax, 'O' for Orange, took off from Tempsford at 9.40 p.m. on August 14, 1943. Its route was similar to a main force of bombers which were raiding Milan that night and, although the plane was well beneath the noisy main force, it helped to draw the attention of German night defences away from the single Halifax. Later Squadron Leader Griffiths recorded details of the flight: 'We crossed the French coast in thick cloud at 7,000 feet in the neighbourhood of Cabourg. This cloud cover, together with rain, persisted all the way to Blois, which we hit off dead on track at 1,000 feet. So far, the navigation was of a very high order. We carried on to Nevers and, at this point, I had my doubts whether it was worth going on for there was still a layer of stratus cloud at 4,000 feet and the land ahead of us was rising rapidly. We saw one of the boys in main force getting a packet at Le Crousot at about 10,000 feet.

'The cloud was breaking rapidly now and we were able to slip over the mountains into the Rhone valley with several hundred feet to spare. By the time we reached Lake Annecy the cloud had dispersed altogether, and the weather conditions were ideal for the operation.'

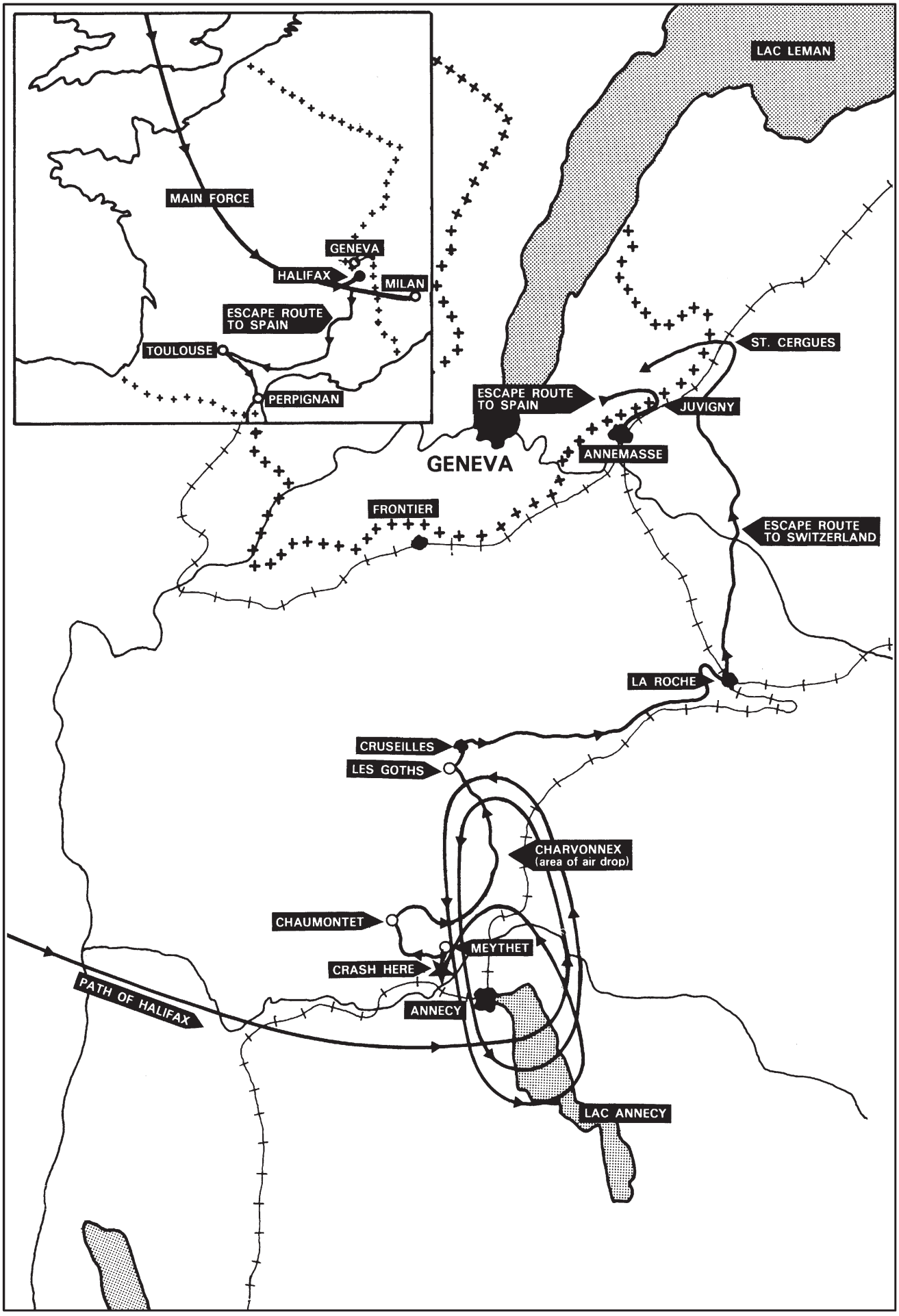
At 1.00 a.m. on the 15th, the aircraft neared the rendezvous which was just to the left of the railway some six miles north of Annecy. For ten minutes, the Halifax flew very low over the mountainous area but the search for the recognition bonfires was unsuccessful. Squadron Leader Griffiths then decided to make a last run over Annecy to drop leaflets and then map read along the railway to the given dropping point: if they saw nothing, he was going to abort the mission and return to England. (The leaflet dropping was to cover up the real reason for the flight and so keep the Germans and Italians occupying the area from searching for the Marquisands involved in collecting the heavy containers.)

Squadron Leader Griffiths continues: 'Sergeant Davies went aft to assist Sergeant Maden in distributing the newspapers. I turned in the middle of Lake Annecy and ran due north, flying over the town at a height of 200 feet. I picked up the railway and started to follow it. I had hardly become clear of the built-up area when the aircraft started to swing to port, and I noticed the colour of the exhaust flames of the outer port motor change to white and die out altogether. I called up the Flight Engineer, but apparently he had not got his head-set plugged in. I trimmed the aircraft, put the airscrew of this engine into full coarse pitch and gave maximum throttle and revs on the other three engines. I opened the bomb doors and ordered the bomb aimer to prepare to jettison. I had hoped to jettison well away from the town and near our point of reception. After a short while I formed the opinion that I might not even have to jettison as the aircraft was performing quite reasonably and gaining a little height. I was still frantically yelling for the Flight Engineer to contact me. I did not wish to feather the dead engine because, owing to the colour of the exhaust flames and because it was turning over quite merrily, I was sure it was petrol trouble and not the usual glycol leak. Had it been the latter, the motor would have seized up. My hopes of getting away with it were soon dashed to the ground as the inner port motor then started to give off white flames and a truly violent swing developed to port. I ordered the bomb aimer to jettison, which he did, and the despatcher, who fortunately had been plugged in the whole time, also heard the order and jettisoned the packages.

'Things were happening far quicker than it takes to read but, at this point, the Flight Engineer called me up and said something to the effect that he must change over to Nos. 1 and 3 tanks. I had hoped that the petrol would surge through in time to give me power to get out of our difficulties. 'O' for Orange was continuing to lose height in a permanent left-hand turn at an air speed of 110 m.p.h. I



Above: **August 1943. A French Gendarme surveys the wreckage of the Halifax in which six men died.** *Below:* **April 1979. The pilot of the aircraft, Frank Griffiths, stands on the same spot (in front of house C on diagram on page 25 which was demolished in the crash). An appropriate, yet totally unconnected, symbol marking the crash site is a broken stone cross.**


LAC LEMAN
MAIN FORCE
GENEVA
HALIFAX
MILAN
ESCAPE ROUTE TO SPAIN
TOULOUSE
PERPIGNAN
ST. CERGUES
ESCAPE ROUTE TO SPAIN
JUVIGNY
ANNEMASSE
GENEVA
FRONTIER
ESCAPE ROUTE TO SWITZERLAND
LA ROCHE
CRUSEILLES
LES GOTHS
CHARVONNEX (area of air drop)
CHAUMONTET
MEYTHET
CRASH HERE
PATH OF HALIFAX
ANNECY
LAC ANNECY

Left: **House A, the first hit by the crashing Halifax. A large portion of wing lies in the foreground.** *Above:* **The house today. Madame Vedova and her two children died in the attic, overcome by the intense petrol fire.** *Below:* **The other side of the same house the morning after the crash. Furniture lies piled on the left. The window, through which M. Maritano jumped to his death, has the broken shutter.** *Bottom:* **Comparison taken 36 years later.**

ordered the crew to their crash stations. The Navigator and Wireless operator went aft like greased lightning but the Bombardier was delayed by his having trouble jettisoning the hatch above my head. I consider that his devotion to duty during those last terrible moments was the reason why I was saved.

'Nothing is so completely useless as a Halifax with two dead motors on the same wing in the bottom of an Alpine valley in the middle of the night. I can distinctly remember the Flight Engineer calling out in a perfectly cheerful voice: "O.K. Skipper, you're on 1 and 3 tanks now"; and another call from Maden: "Despatcher at Crash Stations." I just had time to snap my shoulder-strap tensioning lever into 'Taut', and we touched down on some trees quite gently at 90 m.p.h. indicated. I still had plenty of elevator control and full power on the starboard motors till the very last second. The port wing took the shock first. We ran a short distance and then we hit the first house.'

The crash actually took place in the village of Meythet at the Pont De Tasset crossroad. The Halifax left a part of its port wing on the roof of a house A, before smashing into a second house B and breaking into pieces that scattered across the crossroad. Parts of forward fuselage and wings landed on a small house that collapsed C. The 1,500 gallons of fuel remaining in the tanks set the whole area into a burning inferno; the three houses and the crossroads were on fire and burning petrol flowed down into the nearby river. In the first few seconds, eleven people died: five civilians and six aircrew. The register of deaths for Meythet gives the names as follows:

No. 17. Madame Erminia Della Vedova Age 36.

No. 18. Serge Della Vedova Age 4.

No. 19. Olivier Della Vedova Age 3.

Madame Vedova and her two children were asleep in the attic of house A. The flames caught them unawares and completely engulfed them. Their burned bodies were found the next morning, the mother grasping the younger child in her arms.

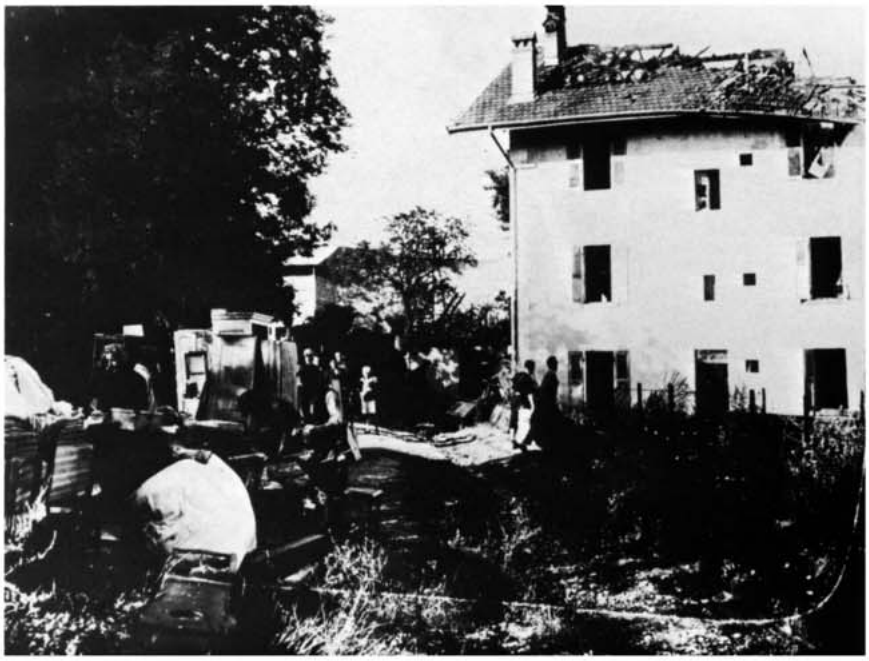
No. 16. M. Ernest Maritano age 51.

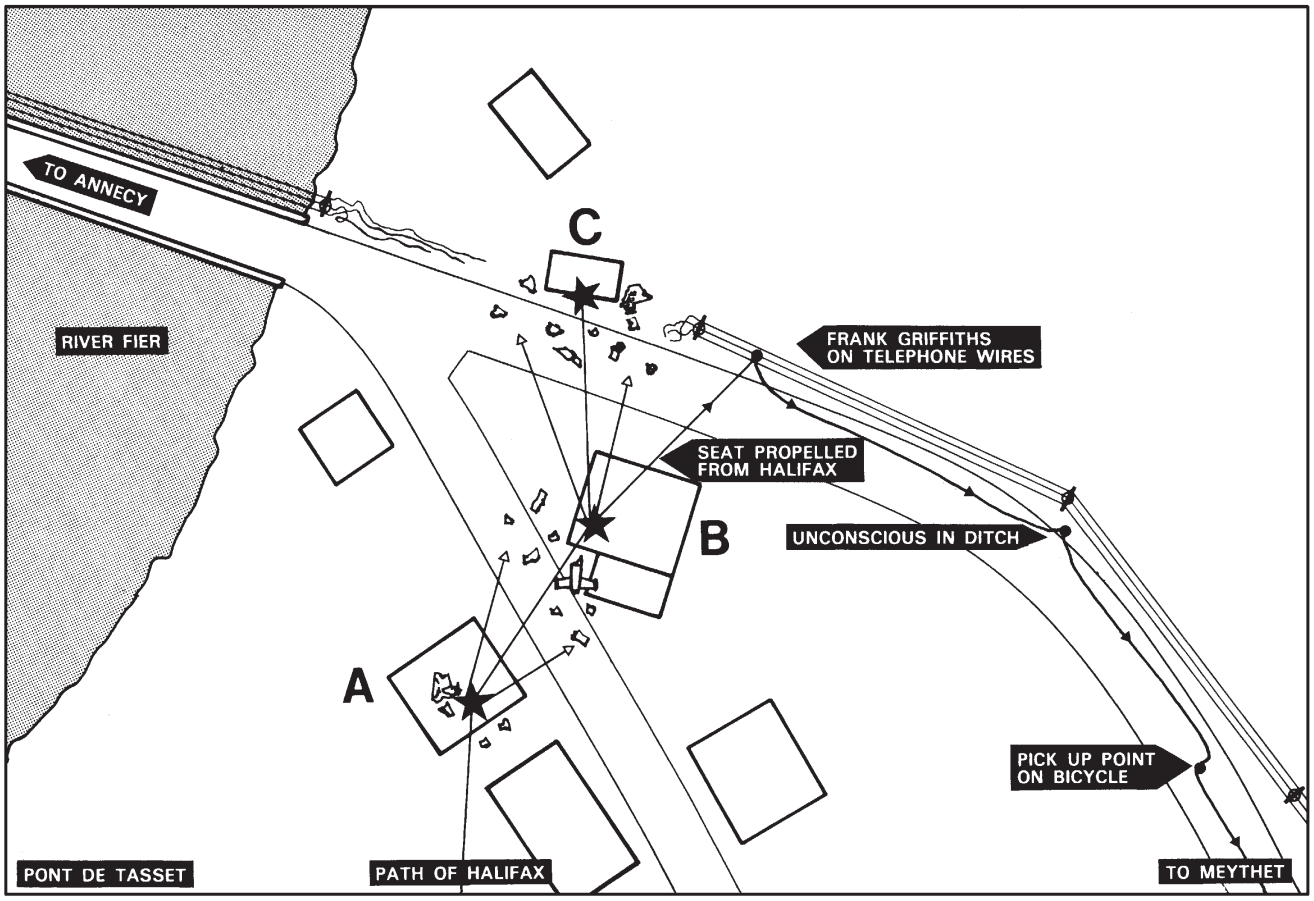
He was living on the second floor of house A. Already burned he tried to escape from his blazing room by jumping from the window but the rescuers only recovered a badly-burned corpse.

No. 15. M. Pierre Krattinger Age 40.

He was the baker of Meythet and was therefore working in house B when the crash occurred. He was crushed to death in front of his oven by falling pieces of aircraft and the collapsing walls of his bakery.

No. 20. Unknown No. 1 has now been





Above: The tailplane of 'O' for Orange still smoulders beside house B nine hours after the crash. All the crash photographs were taken by M. Belingard of Annecy on the morning of August 15. They were presented to Frank Griffiths when he first revisited Pont de Tasset in 1946. *Right:* The sole survivor of the crash returned to the site again in April 1979 in the company of one of our French readers Jean Paul Pallud who took all the present day photographs. This is the house, still showing a damaged corner, in which the baker M. Krattinger died.

Left: **Italian soldiers examine the tailplane. In the background the staircase from which the photographs on page 25 were taken.** *Above:* **Dustbins mark the spot thirty-six years later.**

established as being Sergeant F. R. Davies aged 25.

No. 21. Unknown No. 2 is Sergeant J. Maden aged 20.

No. 22. Unknown No. 3 is Pilot Officer R. A. Mackenzie aged 22.

No. 23. Unknown No. 4 is Flight Sergeant R. W. Peters aged 22.

No. 24. Unknown No. 5 may be Flying Officer S. J. Congdon aged 26.

No. 25. Unknown No. 6 may be Flight Sergeant F. Pollard aged 22.

The first five bodies were found immediately by French rescuers among the debris that littered the area; two were lying on the pavement in front of house B. One was already dead and the other was still breathing but died soon afterwards (believed to be Sergeant J. Maden). Three others were found near their crash stations and the sixth was found later in the morning, completely charred under pieces of the forward fuselage near house C.

The Rescue

When the Halifax smashed onto house B, the pilot Frank Griffiths was propelled out of the aircraft still in his seat and, by an incredible piece of luck this landed in a cluster of telephone wires!

'When I became conscious again' said Griffiths, 'I was hanging in my straps, and I soon became aware that there was a terrible fire raging behind me. I was so dazed and in such terrible fear of burning (it was getting dreadfully hot) that I made two or three panic attempts to get out of my seat, with the straps still on. Finally, I realised what was holding me in my seat and pulled out the pin. I seemed to fall a hell of a distance and I hit the ground with such force that my right arm broke. I think I became unconscious again, for I came to lying under the fire and in a complete panic. I scrambled to my feet and started to run away. After a few yards I was grabbed by two men who spoke excitedly in, I think, Italian. I was bleeding somewhat profusely from various places, and they tried to take off my parachute harness. I could tell by the way they were acting that they didn't know much about parachutes, so I released it myself with my left hand.'

Frank Griffiths was wrong when he identified the men as Italian soldiers as the first Italians did not arrive on the scene until half an hour after the crash. The Frenchman that helped him to get rid of flying equipment was M. Donzel. The other Frenchman, M. Faes, asked Frank Griffiths repeatedly if there were any bombs in the aircraft. Griffiths replied: ''No, No, No''.

Above: **Parts of the aircraft beside the collapsed house C. This was the only spot which may have retained pieces from the Halifax but, unfortunately, it was completely excavated** *(photo below)* **in 1958 to construct a bridge for the A41 autoroute visible in the picture at the top of the page. The telephone poles and wires that saved the life of Squadron Leader Griffiths can still be seen on the right-hand side of both pictures.**

Rene Fontaine, the youth with the bicycle who took Frank Griffiths to his house.

Rene Fontaine died ten years ago. This is his house-cum-garage at Meythet today. Frank Griffiths talks with Paul Santarelli who took him from here to Ma Baraque cafe.

'Suddenly there was a terrific explosion' reported Griffiths later, 'as one of the petrol tanks went up. Sheets of flame and rubbish went over my head and the two 'Eyeties' yelled something about bombs and ran. In thinking of their own skins *(being French locals from Pont de Tasset, they were more concerned for the safety of their families than the future of one obviously lucky British pilot!)* they forgot about me entirely and I turned to the right and ran as hard as I could — not so much to run away from the 'Eyeties' as to get away from the fire. That fire will haunt me for the rest of my life. We still had 1,500 gallons left when we crashed. I don't think I got very far before I passed out. This time I became conscious again lying in a ditch covered with dirt and earth and still only about 200 yards away from the burning aircraft. There was a woman sitting on the bank above me crying her heart out. She was very old and I can remember her face very clearly for it showed up well in the light of the fire. She didn't know I was lying at her feet and she didn't take the slightest notice of me when I got up. Instead of a service shirt I was wearing an extraordinary affair of dark blue with white horizontal stripes. I always wore this on ops. since I could become a civilian in a matter of seconds by discarding my tunic. The 'Eyeties' had already removed my parachute harness and the 'Mae West' so, as I walked up the road, I think I was taken for a Frenchman. As my back was to the fire I don't think the crowd could see the blood on my face — in any case they were engrossed in watching the burning aircraft and the three houses which were now also well alight. I started to walk up the village street. After quite a short distance I saw a youth on a bicycle coming towards me. He looked at me very closely as he passed, stopped immediately, and chased after me. I could see right away that he was friendly. He said in a hushed whisper in French, "You are English," to which I replied, "Yes; where are the Boche?" He said, "There aren't any round here. They are all Italians." I told him that I was going to try and get to Spain and turned away to start up the road again. He grabbed my arm and said, "No, no, I will hide you; get on the bike." I sat on the cross-bar side-saddle and he mounted behind. Then I found that both my arms were useless. I could see that my right wrist was broken and I had such a pain in my left shoulder that I couldn't hang on to the handle-bars properly. I had to lie foward on them with a small-nut drilling a hole in my chest all the time. When we came to a steep bit of hill my helper yelled out to another lad who was on his way down to the crash to come and give a push. This second laddie tagged on behind and pushed, and we made good headway. Fortunately we didn't have far to go. We stopped at a house on the right and went upstairs to the kitchen. There was quite a crowd in the kitchen and shrieks went up from the women when they saw me. I must have looked a lot worse than I felt.'

The man with the bicycle was actually Rene Fontaine (he died some ten years ago). The second man was Jean Dujourdhui (he died 1944 when he was in German captivity at Annecy for his 'maquisard' activity). Frank Griffiths was taken to Rene Fontaine's house where he was given a glass of local brandy.

'First of all', continued Griffiths, 'they said that they had seen my companions jump out with their parachutes. It dawned on me that what they had seen were the jettisoned containers, so I told them that all my crew were in the aircraft when it crashed, and that what they had seen were fifteen parachutes with arms for the French. I was going to mention that there were also four packages but, before I could put it into French, half the room suddenly emptied. I think they thought that they'd better get the containers before the Italians! The lad with the long hair (Rene Fontaine) who had originally put me on the bicycle told me that he belonged to the Maquis, and that he had sent a message to headquarters asking them to come for me in a lorry. I thought that all this sounded a bit high-handed, and that perhaps I was still delirious, but then at that time I didn't know the Maquis.

'While we were conversing the lady of the house was bathing my various abrasions and stopping the bleeding as best she could.

'They produced a civvy pair of trousers for me as my battle bags were too obvious and, on emptying my pockets, they were overjoyed to find my .32 Colt repeater.

'By this time the effect of the Schnapps, was wearing off and I knew I was going to pass out. When I came to I thought we were playing that game in the Mess when we jump on each other's backs and I couldn't understand why people were talking a foreign language. Finally, the linoleum started to come properly into focus, and I became fully conscious to find a Frenchman holding my head between my knees. Another glass of Schnapps and I was fully recovered.

'The noise of desultory firing could be heard from down the street, and I went to the window with the others. I was surprised to see how close we were to "O" Orange. The fire was only about 400 yards down the road. I remarked that I thought the firing was caused by the bullets exploding in the machine-gun magazines and then we heard the staccato rattle of ordinary machine-gun fire. I learnt the next day that the ammunition in the aircraft had in fact started exploding with the heat and that the Italians had thought that one of the gunners in the midst of the inferno had opened fire on them. In reply they had opened up with one of their machine guns and succeeded in wounding six of their own men who were on the other side of the fire. At 0200 hours (three quarters of an hour after crashing) a lorry drew up outside and a man burst into the room brandishing a revolver. He took my Colt, cocked it, and stuck it in my right-hand inside breast pocket where I could just get at it. We went downstairs immediately. I didn't even have time to thank the folks for what they'd done for me, and I had intended giving them some of the 1,000 francs which I had on me to pay for the clothes.

'I got into the front of the lorry and just had time to notice that the back was full of men armed with revolvers and Sten guns. Seeing the old Sten gun made me feel quite at home.'

Actually the house was not so near the crash, it was about 1,000 yards away. If the Italians had really opened fire, it was not against the fire but when they were searching for the containers in the darkness in a wooded area. It seems that no Italian soldiers were really wounded. The lorry driver was Marius Angelloz (he died ten years ago). The back of the lorry was not full of armed men; there were only two: Marcel Gay (he could not be traced today) and Paul Santarelli. The only weapon they had was a single revolver. If Frank Griffiths was reassured somewhere by the view of Sten guns, it was not here but later at Ma Baraque cafe!

Frank Griffiths' first hour in France seems to have been a masterpiece of organisation and he was astonished by the Maquis efficiency and was unable to understand that chance had a big part in it. The lorry that was so quickly on the scene to transport him had, in fact, been driven to Meythet by three curious Maquisards looking for the reason for the big fire. Rene Fontaine met them coming back from the fire to their lorry which they had parked near his house.

Marius Angelloz, driver of the lorry.

Frank Griffiths' 1944 report continues: 'We backed into the road and then the motor stalled! However, just as the starter was on its last gasp, she fired and we shot up the road at the rate of knots. We soon forked left on to a very secondary road, switched off the lights, and the driver heaved a sigh of relief. So did I. It was bright moonlight and an extremely mountainous road. The speed we drove at was just fantastic. I've always admired French drivers, but this laddie was simply amazing. He obviously knew the road very well.

'We drove for about 4 or 5 miles and then, after switching off the engine, coasted downhill into a valley. We stopped some 200 yards short of what appeared to be a large farm. The driver explained that this was one of the Maquis hide-outs and that I should stay here but, before approaching, some of the men would go forward and make sure that the coast was clear. When the reconnaissance party returned we carried on down to the buildings and ran the lorry into a large implement shed. I was led to the back door and taken straight upstairs.

'I was taken into a room in which bowls, first-aid kit, etc., were laid out. Here a great crowd gathered round while a young Maquis, who had probably been a medical student, started to clean my wounds up a bit more. They had not had time to finish the job at the first house.

'The place at which I had arrived was 'Ma Baraque', a farm-cum-public-house on a busy main road. We had approached it by a little-used road over the mountains. Pat, the officer in charge, was a young Frenchman of twenty-two and his section was a portion of the Secret Army. They were known as mobilised Maquis, and during the day they hid in this house, going out at night to carry out their allotted tasks of sabotage and "bumping-off of collaborators." Each was armed with a revolver, and they had three Sten guns besides a few hand-grenades.

'Ma Baraque' was run by 'La Pepette'. It was a very popular place of call for Italians, Gendarmes, the odd German and a few Gestapo men. If only those customers had realised as they sat drinking below that above their heads were nine desperate men with sufficient arms and explosives to start a small war!

'While they were bandaging up my head everyone suddenly stopped talking and listened intently. I thought the Italians were coming but everyone looked so frightfully pleased that I couldn't understand what was going on. Then it dawned on me. The noise we heard was main force coming back from Milan, and all had drinks on the strength of it. They told me that they always sat up when Bomber Command went over, and drank to the boys' good fortune. I only wish the boys up aloft could know of the joy they bring to French people as they go over. I myself felt a bit depressed. Main force would be home in two hours, and here was I stuck in France and, even with the best of good fortune, no hope of seeing England for months.

'One of the merry men sat up with me all night. I've never seen a tougher, fitter-looking bunch of men in all my life and yet they were as gentle as any woman when it came to nursing. I had noticed how well their first-aid kit was applied and apparently they used it a good deal.

'Pat came to see me after breakfast. He was sending a report to his headquarters about the crash and a man to see if he could locate the remainder of my crew who, they thought, had escaped. He told me the doctor would come later and set my arm.

'I gave him the names, Christian names, and nicknames of all the crew and told him the type and colour of the dog which I had at home and which was well known to and somewhat of a joke with the rest of the Squadron. Any alleged escapee would, on questioning, have to answer correctly.

'La Pepette was Mrs. Bastin (she died in 1978) and Pat was Mr. de Brouville (he is still living but would rather forget the war). The information given by Frank Griffiths about his mission and his crew was shown to an unknown Secret Army Staff agent in Annecy by Paul Santarelli. He still possesses the original written account but with no traces concerning Frank Griffiths's dog!

'The doctor arrived about ten o'clock and proceeded to clean me up a bit more. The odd cuts and abrasions were pretty painful in their reaction to the peculiar red antiseptic which is so popular in France but the real fun came when he started to set my arm without any anaesthetic. Two strong Maquis held me down and the job was soon over. He lashed the arm to three pieces of margarine box and told me to keep it like that for thirty days. He made a pretty good job of it for, when I got to Switzerland, I had it X-rayed and it was a practically perfect join.

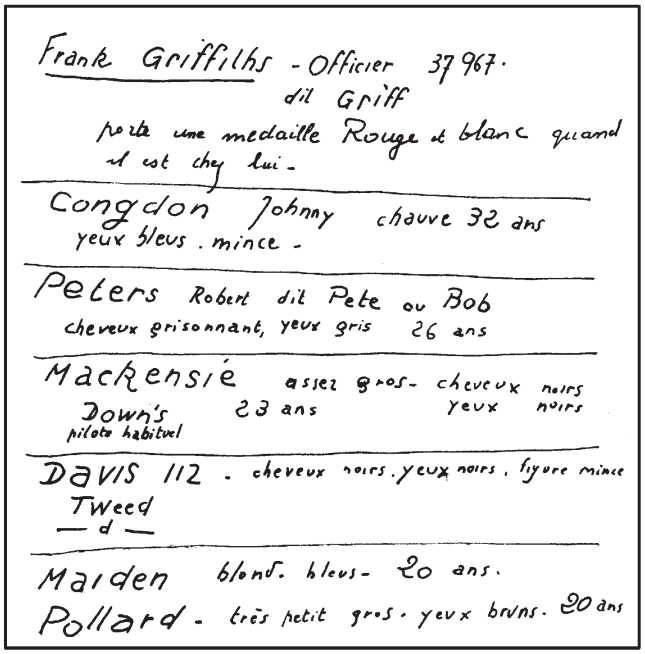
'At mid-day Pat came in with the news that, as far as he could find out, all my crew had been killed. He also told me that the Italians were carrying out a systematic search for me. They were using dogs on leads, the system being to surround a wood, make the dogs bark and then fire a few rounds into the wood.

'Shortly afterwards I heard the sound of firing getting closer and closer and I was in a blue funk. Pat tried to alleviate my fear by assuring me that he would see that I was not taken alive. This wasn't very reassuring but it was a slight misunderstanding owing to his not having spoken English for so long. What he meant to say was: "Have no fear. They will not take you while one of us is alive." And he meant it, too. As four of the merry men were condemned to death anyhow, they meant to make a fight of it to the finish!

'It got very hot after mid-day and the sounds of firing died down. Patrols of Italians still kept whizzing past in cars and lorries but it was apparently too warm for them to go on scrambling up the mountain-side.'

The doctor who expertly attended Frank Griffiths' arm was Yves Raisin, the man that had organised the mission! As his sympathies for the Maquis was well known, he was advised of Frank Griffiths' presence at 'Ma Baraque' and he pedalled hurriedly on his bicycle the 10 kilometres from Annecy. He was a perfect Intelligence agent — nobody there knew he had planned the flight and he did nothing to solve the mystery.

Left: **In 1969 Frank Griffiths met Pepette Bastin again, the former proprietress of Ma Baraque,** *photo above.* **Codename for the Maquis sub-circuit involved was DIRECTOR.**



Frank Griffiths - Officier 37967.
dit Griff
porte une medaille Rouge et blanc quand il est chez lui.

Congdon Johnny chauve 32 ans
yeux bleus. mince.

Peters Robert dit Pete ou Bob
cheveux grisonnant, yeux gris 26 ans

Mackensie assez gros. cheveux noirs
Down's 23 ans yeux noirs
pilote habitué

Davis 112. cheveux noirs. yeux noirs, figure mince
Tweed
— d —

Maiden blond. bleus. 20 ans.

Pollard. très petit gros. yeux bruns. 20 ans

The notes taken down by M. de Brouville (Pat) as a result of his request for details about the crew of the Halifax. Original still in possession of Paul Santarelli.

Yves Raisin, the doctor who set Frank's arm, examines his handiwork in 1979. M. Raisin was also the agent who chose the place at Charvonmex *(photo below)* for the parachute drop.

'I dropped into a doze, and awoke soon after midnight to find a terrible commotion going on. I thought the Italians had come for me. All the merry men were dashing around with Sten guns and manning the windows. Soon they were all in position and dead quiet reigned. Pat came in very much out of breath and told me that they had gone to the place where I had jettisoned, but that the area was guarded by Italians. They had nearly been caught but had got away without having to bump any of them off.

'Then they heard from a friend that some of the Gendarmes had part of my load at the police station. They had dashed into the police station, held the Gendarmes up, and forced them to give up ten Sten guns. Those they put into sacks (there were only three of them in the raiding party) and then they beat it on bicycles, hotly pursued by the Gendarmes. They thought that they had thrown the Gendarmes off the scent but, in case of a surprise attack, they were going to man the defences all night. Thank goodness no attack developed. I just lay and sweated all night long.'

Some weapons were also recovered by other Maquisard groups which found containers before the Gendarmes or Italians. Although the authorities retrieved two-thirds of the load, most of the remainder simply disappeared into French but not Maquisard hands —food, clothes, money and even weapons were thus 'saved' from the Italians! (One of these weapons killed another civilian some months later when a young boy killed his friend while playing with a gun.)

'Next day, Monday, was a comparatively quiet day. Soon after dark, Pat and a man whom I was to know later as Quino, came into my room and sat down quietly on the bed. Pat said, "This man was in a bar in Annecy a short while ago and a Gendarme said to him, 'If I were you I should move your friend. The Italians know where he is now and they are coming for him at ten o'clock tonight.' That gives us half an hour to get out. I'll come and dress you in a few minutes, then we shall eat and start off up the mountain at ten to ten." I told him that I was quite capable of walking at least ten miles, and he said that we weren't going very far — only 1,000 metres. What he didn't explain was that we were going 1,000 metres vertically! We started to climb up the mountain at the back of Ma Baraque at a few

minutes to ten, scrambling upwards among nut bushes. Some of the Maquis stayed behind as a rearguard hiding in cunningly concealed fox-holes which looked down on Ma Baraque at the bottom of the valley. I noticed that they had a very good field of fire and, if they wanted to retreat, it was very easy to get away in the 'underground passages' of the nut bushes.

'I had a 'bedroom' allotted me which had been cut out of the bushes. It had wire-netting stretched between four bushes and covered with hay. This made a marvellous bed, and that night, for the first time, I slept well. One of the contributing factors was the feeling of safety. In the Maquis I knew I could run for it but in the house I should have been trapped. Some time after midnight Pepette came to see how I was getting on. She had climbed all the way up to bring me a drink of water and an extra blanket. That woman looked after us as though we were her own children. Whenever I tried to thank her she would merely say, "It is for France."

'After breakfast the Maquis started to clean their guns. This was a ritual carried out every morning and I noticed that only half were cleaned at a time. The rest were ready in case of emergency.

'Following dinner we were lying on the ground playing cards when Pat brought in a civilian shaking with fright and as white as a sheet. He was a youth of about twenty with a weak-looking chin and he had been caught snooping around. He said he was just picking nuts but they were taking no chances with him. He was to be kept a prisoner until I got away and if I was subsequently captured he was going to be shot. He seemed quite relieved, for he thought he was going to be shot on the spot. He wasn't tied up in any way. Pat said that he was so scared he wouldn't have the guts to make a break for it. They had had him under suspicion for some time but not enough proof to shoot him. He was still there, crouching under the nut bushes, when I left.'

Frank Griffiths was in a worse physical state than he thought and the ten miles would have been a very difficult walk for him. He was led by a roundabout route up to this magnificent defence position on a bluff overlooking Ma Baraque.

The prisoner was not a spy but only a curious youngster, Gaston Bocquet who was killed in 1944, as a Maquisard, during a fight against German troops. Rene Fontaine himself was kept prisoner here some ten days, when Frank Griffiths was in Cruseilles, to avoid any indiscretions.

Escape to Geneva

'The Chief of the Secret Army came to see me during the afternoon. He was in civilian kit but no Air Marshal could have had a more courteous reception. The discipline of the Maquis was magnificent. Nobody ever moaned at being given a job to do. Everybody was mad keen and they even practised, in the open air, going into an office, saluting, removing headgear, replacing headgear, saluting and going out again. The Chief had come to say that arrangements had been made for me to travel to a point adjacent to the Swiss frontier in a car with a motor-cyclist outrider at 5.00 p.m. I had no papers, and the marks on my face were enough to give me away anyway so the motor-cyclist was to go first and make certain that the road was clear of controls. If we came across a Gendarme I was to moan and the driver would say that I had met with a terrible accident and he was rushing me to hospital.

'In preparation for going over the frontier into Switzerland I was made to practice crawling, which, with my two bad arms, I had to do on my back. I got quite good at it after a bit but it is somewhat hard on clothes.

'There was a great shortage of razor blades in France and that afternoon, without any anaesthetic, I was shaved by Pat with a blade six weeks old! He left the hair round the cuts and chopped the rest off. It was murder. Finally I was dressed with a trilby hat pulled well over the forehead to hide the cuts and a pair of huge dark glasses to cover my black eyes. All I had to do was to dab my nose with a handkerchief to cover a cut there and I looked fairly normal.

'At five o'clock the car arrived with Quino as driver and a motor-cyclist as escort. We set off for Geneva and, after a few kilometres, stopped outside a garage to get some petrol for the motor-bike. This took quite a while and I gathered it was a black-market deal. I sat in the back of the car and watched people go past. I was amazed that no one took any notice of me. The deal for petrol was eventually concluded and off we set once more.

'At a town called Cruseilles we pulled up before entering while the motor-cyclist went ahead to do a thorough reconnaissance. He returned after ten minutes, gave us the O.K., and we drove on. The next halt was outside St. Julien. Here, however, the motor-cyclist returned shaking his head. There was a heated discussion in very fast French, not a word of which I understood. Finally, Quino suggested that I should get out and hide in some bushes while they drove on into the town and saw how the land lay.

'I lay in the bushes for twenty minutes and finally the car and motor-cycle returned. They said it was hopeless trying to get through today and that they would take me to a little farm where it was very tranquil.'

The chief of Secret Army in Haute Savoie was Colonel Valette D'Osia. The man that savagely shaved Frank Griffiths was not Pat but Francois Castaldo who was shot by Germans in 1944 for his marquisard activities. Quino was Edouard Peccoud: he died some years ago. The motor-cyclist was Lucien Megevand. The place was a little village named Les Goths near the town of Cruseilles.

'It was in the bottom of a deep valley with never a sound of a train, car, aircraft or internal combustion engine of any kind. I never quite worked out the relationships of the people who lived there. There was a young non-mobilised Maquis called Andre, his wife, a woman of about thirty with a baby which wasn't hers and a young girl of about seventeen.

'Before they left, Quino told me that there had been 7,000 people at the funeral of my crew that morning. We had heard the bell tolling when we were away up the hillside. The

Above: **Two ex-Maquis, Paul Santarelli and Edouard Sylvestre, show Frank the site of their old hideout in the Chaumontet woods where he was hidden in 1943.** *Below:* **Frank, sportingly, tries out his old bed under the nut bushes.**

Next hiding place on the escape route to Switzerland — the farm at Les Goths pictured in 1946. Madame Pallud showed Frank the same room he occupied during his escape.

Beneath the spreading Victoria plum tree.

crowd had sung the "Marseillaise" and nearly everybody had brought flowers. Many of the wreaths were in the form of a Croix de Lorraine. I myself would have liked to send some flowers but, this being impracticable at the time, one month after the funeral a wreath was put on the grave (it was a communal grave) from me with a note reading as follows:

To: Johnnie, Maden,
Bob, Pollard
Mack, Davies.

Soyez tranquil. Nous acheverons le tache. Votre Capitaine. 'TAFFY.'

'Quino and his party left me then in the care of Andre saying that I was to remain here until called for. There ensued a period of absolute peace. For the first time since I had left England I was able to eat, and, like everybody else, Andre's family just couldn't do enough for me. Here I had my first wash for three days and I spent all day long lying in a deck-chair under a Victoria plum tree in the garden just sleeping and eating plums. I always kept a pro-Nazi paper handy to put over my face and pretend I was asleep when the neighbours called. The paper was 'Le Petit Dauphinois,' and it certainly stopped people talking to me. Andre told the neighbours that I was a relative from Lyons who had met with an accident.

'Life was very pleasant at Andre's and I had a feeling of complete security until the second night when I woke up at 2.00 a.m. to hear a man screaming his head off. I broke out into a sweat of fear right away for I imagined that the Gestapo had got hold of one of the menfolk and were trying to force him to tell them where I was. I tried to cock the Colt, but I couldn't do it with my one hand. Then I thought I might risk a jump from the bedroom window, which was fairly low, and make a dash for open country. Just as I climbed on the sill there was a piercing scream from almost right below me and, in the full light of the moon, I could see a man throwing his head back making all the noise. I was a bit taken aback at first but I soon realised that he was as mad as a hatter, and then Andre let me know that it was all right. Apparently he usually came around this way at full moon. He seemed quite casual about it but my pulse didn't settle down till after breakfast.

'On the afternoon of the third day at Andre's I retired to bed after an enormous lunch and awoke to find the room full of people with Quino on one side of the bed and a young blonde girl of twenty-two on the other. Quino introduced me to the girl who was called Colette and said that I was to go courting with her that afternoon, the principle being that I had to approach the Swiss frontier through some wild country. If I went alone I might arouse suspicion but if I had a girl with me the Italian frontier guard would merely think that we were "walking out." '

Andre was Andre Pallud (no relation of the author) who died in February 1945 in the German concentration camp at Neuengamme. The woman with the baby (it was hers!) was Marie Rose Pallud (she is still living and accommodated Frank Griffiths during his visit). Colette was Colette Perries, now married and living in Paris.

'After the usual French ceremony of saying "Good-bye" we set off in a Citroen saloon which was propelled by a gasogene (wood fuel burning) apparatus. The driver, Quino, and Colette sat in front and I sat in the back with the spare wheel and great bags of fuel for the gasogene apparatus. The windows were blacked out and I never quite gathered whether this was done so that my face might not be seen or whether it was to hide the fact that the back of the car was usually like a cellar full of coal, for the fuel for the gasogene had to be carried somewhere.

'As we climbed up out of the valley we met the motor-cyclist outrider, who was waiting for us under a tree. He set off ahead of us at high speed and immediately our nearside rear tyre burst. Muttering terrible French curses about ersatz rubber, Quino and the driver set-to to change the wheel. Then the jack wouldn't fit. It was very hot and I sat on a high pumpkin at the side of the road whilst Colette kept at a respectable distance from the terrible French curses. Finally the wheel was changed and we chased off after the motor-cycle. This time I was to approach Switzerland from another direction altogether which meant a drive of about 40 kilometres. We passed through the town of Cruseilles once more and ran through some glorious country towards Bonneville. It was an extremely hot day and the gasogene apparatus made things even hotter inside the car. We caught up with the motor-cyclist after a lengthy chase and the whole journey went very smoothly. There were about four danger-spots on the way but there was no control at any of them. We nearly lost our motor-cyclist once more when he shot under the level-crossing gates at La Roche sur Foron just as they were coming down. Wild shrieks on the horn persuaded the railway man to stop winding down the gates and we shot under them with a few inches to spare. In

Escape from the mad hatter — 1979 style!

Bonne there were quite a few Italians off duty sitting on the walls of a barracks. They looked very like the prisoners-of-war in England; in fact, I was subconsciously looking for the brightly coloured patch on their trouser legs.

'When we were about two miles from our crossing-point at the frontier, we stopped the car and sat at the roadside while Colette went ahead on the pillion of the motor-cycle to see that all was clear. The motor-cyclist returned to say that all was O.K. and we set off on our last lap. We turned into a very third-rate road, went down it a short distance and got out. The driver went back in the car and Colette, Quino, the motor-cyclist and I strolled on down the lane. It was essential to stroll and not to walk in order to allay suspicion. I had discarded the sling which had supported my arm and had my thumb in my coat button and Colette's small coat over my arm. Provided I pretended to blow my nose if anyone passed me, they wouldn't be able to tell that I had met with an accident.

'We soon got a good view of the lie of the land ahead. This small lane led down the side of a valley, across a railway line and right up

Colette Perries who guided Frank Griffiths across the frontier with M. and Mdme. Merandon in front of their farm at St. Cergues. The window through which Frank saw the Italian guards singing is to the right of the door.

to the frontier post ahead. Quino and the motor-cyclist were going on to the frontier post and were going to buy cigarettes from the Italian guard while Colette and I turned right after crossing the railway and wandered through a small copse of bushes and a couple of hayfields. Our eventual object was to reach a farmhouse on the farther hill where we were to hide till dark and then cross the wire. We passed some French farm labourers working in a field just as we came to the railway and my faith in my disguise was somewhat shattered by one of them giving the V-sign. We separated after crossing the railway and Colette and I started on our walk across country. When we were in the bushes I cocked my Colt and got my RAF wire-cutters handy. The frontier looked so close now that I was determined to get across at any cost. From the bushes up to the farmhouse we had to cross two fields and walk a few hundred yards along a main road. It was ghastly strolling along hand in hand and chewing grass. My mouth was dead dry. It was worse than crossing the Dutch coast at nought feet on a moonlight night. We reached the farmhouse and went into the kitchen, which was in the front of the house facing the road.'

The driver of the gasogene was Marcel Fournier. The farmhouse in St. Cergues belonged to the Merandon family.

'They had been expecting us and the old farmer was overjoyed. He kept saying that I was the first Englishman he had passed over the frontier and that he felt very honoured. I drank a pint of fresh milk and we all sat round the kitchen table chatting.

'Suddenly I could hear the noise of singing in the distance. It was coming nearer and getting louder and it wasn't just ordinary singing. It was real opera stuff sung in harmony by several voices. Then the songsters came in sight. They were five very small short Italians with bent backs and long guns over their shoulders but on their heads were enormous hats with great long feathers. The feathers seemed to trail from the front of the hat to the middle of their backs. These were the frontier guard, looking more like a scene from a comic opera, and all my fear seemed to disappear.

'Quino and the motor-cyclist arrived soon afterwards. They had kept the 'Eyeties' interested at the frontier post while we crossed the two fields. They partook of a glass of wine and we sat round the table chatting for quite a while. Quino told me that the Italians were announcing the fact that they had shot me down.

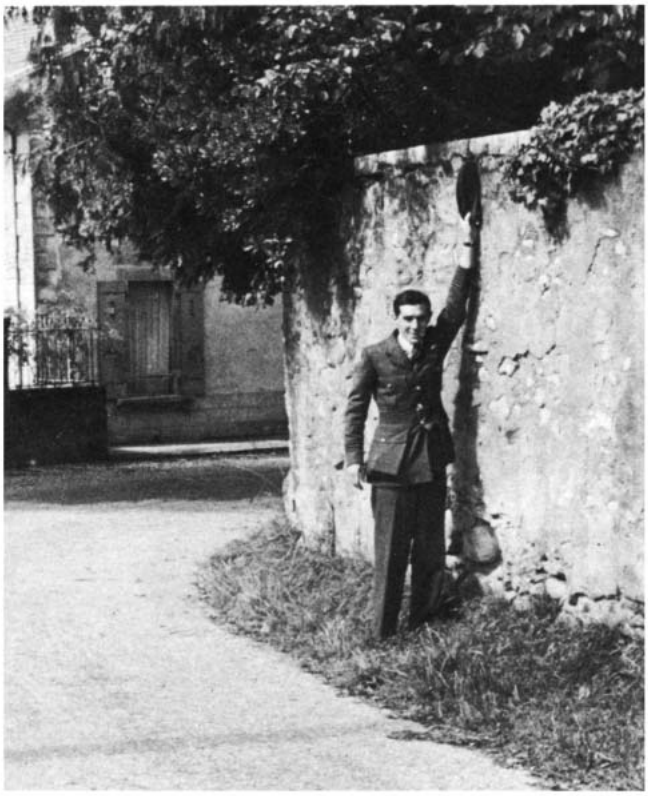
'As Colette and I had some two hours to wait before it would be dark enough to go further. Quino and the motor-cyclist said "Good-bye" and went off back to Annecy. The farmer took Colette and me out to his summerhouse in the garden. This was covered with rambler roses growing on lattice-work and from here we were able to watch the Italian frontier patrols through the lattice-work without their seeing us. They weren't very interested in their work. It would have been easy enough to crawl out the 100 yards in daylight and cut through the wire while the patrol was the other end of his beat.

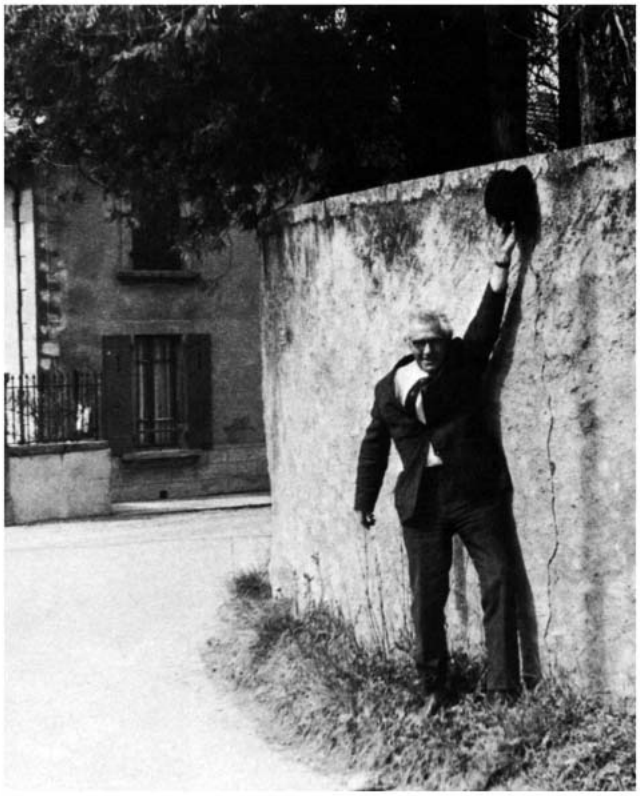
'When it began to get dark (at about 8.00 p.m. Swiss time) the farmer sent his two daughters to the frontier posts to check up on the Italians' activity. A thunderstorm had started and both girls returned with the news that as it was raining the patrols had come in and that they were all playing cards. We crept from the back of the house to a small kitchen garden which he had only about thirty feet from the wire. We hid in the sunflowers. He showed me the exact spot to tackle the wire. He said it was loose at the bottom and, seeing that I had my RAF pliers ready, he asked me not to cut it if I could help it as that might raise suspicion. Colette and I crept quickly across to the wire, and I was just lifting the bottom up when there was a terrific flash of lightning. We were only 50 yards from the fortified house in which the patrols were sheltering but they had closed the shutters over the windows to keep the rain out. It was a bit of a tight squeeze but I managed to get under the wire on my back while Colette held it up. She, being very slim and athletic, nipped through quickly after me. We tucked the wire away at the bottom in the long grass so that it didn't look as though it had been disturbed and set off across an enormous field.

'We walked the first 100 yards in silence, then Colette whispered, "Libre." I just couldn't reply; my heart was too full, so I just squeezed her hand. It seemed strange, this sudden freedom which I felt after passing the wire. The relief from tension almost brought tears to my eyes.'

Frank simulates his backward crawl on the precise spot where he squeezed under the frontier wire with Colette to Switzerland in 1943. The barbed-wire was removed after the war and nothing now stops an 'escapee' strolling across the border.

After walking the first hundred yards they were stopped by a very impressive Swiss soldier, carrying a rifle with fixed bayonet. He was a German-speaking Swiss and he was as frightened as the two escapers. Swiss soldiers and frontier guards had heard many stories of terrorists and murderers crossing the border. Being a German-speaking Swiss, he was rather pro-German and unable to understand the explanations of the French (or English) speaking escapers. After some minutes in this difficult situation, they were taken to a frontier post where the atmosphere was more relaxed. The key man in the Swiss security police was then informed and the two refugees were soon assured of their safety — Frank Griffiths being taken by Swiss intelligence for questioning, and thence to hospital in Geneva.





In 1946 Frank revisited the spot at Juvigny near Annemasse where he dropped over the garden wall into France en route for Spain. Jean Paul Pallud took the marvellous comparison in 1979.

Return to France

During the next ten weeks the Swiss allowed Griffiths to stay in Geneva for medical treatment. He was not idle. He assisted 'Victor', SOE's representative in Geneva in a complex plan to fly out some forty RAF aircrew interned at Vevey. This was to be done by embarking them in a Sunderland aircraft which would land on the French side of Lake Leman and entailed the laying of a flarepath for a night landing. The scheme however had to be abandoned as a Sunderland could not be spared from the Battle of the Atlantic. In case the Germans invaded Switzerland, he carried out with 'Victor' a survey of suitable large fields in the Canton of Vaud which could be used by Hudson aircraft for pick ups. (Landing on Swiss soil or water could not be carried out while Switzerland remained neutral.) However he was itching to get back to England and his return was planned through France and Spain as he explains:

'It only took ten minutes to drive to the frontier from Geneva and here I met two other men who were also going to try and cross the frontier. They were Belgians called Jean and Freddie but they both spoke excellent English. This was their second attempt and they too hoped to be picked up by a member of the French Maquis on the other side. The whole business was a bit vague but perhaps rightly so for if one is caught the less one knows the less one can give away.

'We went into an overgrown garden of a large house, crept to the bottom of the garden and hid under some laurel bushes under a wall. Over the wall was France and after listening carefully we dropped over one by one. But what a drop! I went last and nearly broke my back. We were off! In France at last! My mouth went dry right away and I realised that the old windup had come back just as it had been when I was on the wrong side of the frontier before. Each time I was in France I was scared stiff for the first forty-eight hours and then got used to things and became confident. We walked fifty metres down the road, turned a corner and walked slap into a gendarme who was in front of a sentry box at the side of the wall over which we had just jumped! I felt sure that he must have heard us jump. We walked on for about two kilometres and then had a consultation. We were beginning to feel panicky as we reckoned there was only forty minutes to curfew. Finally as we had not met our friends whom we hoped would be waiting for us, the only thing we could think of was to try and get back into Switzerland and start all over again. Freddie then recollected that he had heard that the Garage Savoie was quite a pro-Allied concern and that someone at the garage might help us. We asked several civilians for the Garage Savoie but no one seemed to have heard of it. I suggested retracing our steps for half a kilometre as I had noticed the Swiss frontier running alongside the road for a short distance.

'When we were only 400 metres from the place where I thought we could cut through, a Gendarme stepped out of the darkness and halted us. This gendarme seemed a much tougher proposition than the last. He asked us where we had come from and where we were going to. Freddie did all the answering. He told some old story and added that we were looking for the Garage Savoie. The Gendarme replied that he didn't believe us. He said "You've just crossed the frontier haven't you?" Freddie and Jean both protested our innocence in very loud voices as only Frenchmen can. I remained dumb. Then to my amazement the gendarme said that the Garage Savoie was about three kilometers down the road in Annemasse and that if we wanted to get there before curfew we had better hurry. Off we set.

'We had the most awful job to find the Garage Savoie. The civilians we asked, kept sending us to different garages but none had the right name. Things were getting pretty desperate. There was only ten minutes left to curfew and I felt like making a dash for open country, walking all night and getting back into Switzerland where I had first crossed the frontier in August. I reckoned I could just do it before dawn. Freddie and I were strolling along talking this over when I felt that we were being followed by a man on a bicycle; furthermore it dawned on me that he had been following us for some time. We stopped and the man stopped near us. Then he said "Are you looking for the Garage Savoie?" We replied that we were. I knew then somehow that it was somebody in the know and yet he might be a Gestapo man. Freddie realised that things were getting pretty desperate with the approach of curfew so we told him that we'd come from Switzerland and were trying to get away fron the frontier. Just then Jean joined us. He'd been asking for the Garage Savoie but still hadn't had any luck. The man with the bike said we'd better go with him and we walked a couple of blocks and entered some flats climbing to the fourth floor. The man with the bike, (which he had jettisoned in the basement) rang two rings and a short one on the bell of a flat and a vivacious petite Frenchwoman opened the door, let us in quickly and closed it after us. Behind the door hung some Gendarme uniforms and I thought we'd been trapped. The one reassuring fact was the enthusiasm on the woman's face. I've mentioned this enthusiasm before. Its something you can't explain but you just know that people are alright and on your side. Someday I expect my intuitions will let me down.'

Frank Griffiths and the two Belgians stayed four days in Mr. and Mrs. Roche's flat in Annemasse. He was then introduced to Francoise who was going to pass him on to the South.

On to Spain

'I was never so surprised in my life. The last French girl with whom I had travelled had been a blonde of some twenty summers. Francoise was 68 years old. She had two prominent bottom teeth and smoked incessantly. She wanted to know all my particulars and fairly screamed at me when I wouldn't

give her my base and squadron number. Actually it was just a gag on her part to find out whether I was a stool pigeon or genuine. Francoise had been working for the underground movement far too long to get caught out. Her appearance, being that of a dear old grandmother, enabled her to get away with things where any other person would be suspect. Finally Francoise said that she would take me to Toulouse on the 5.10 p.m. train from Annemasse the next day. I learnt later that despite her age she spent on an average twenty-three nights in each month in trains travelling all over France. She seemed to be in a bad state of health and hadn't very long to live. Her only living relative, a nephew, was in a concentration camp and her sole object in life was organizing or helping in the destruction of Germans.'

Jean and Freddie's escape was planned separately; they arrived in England a month before Frank Griffiths. On October 22 he started his travel to Spain. Mr. Roche took him to the station where they had a drink in a back room of the buffet. The story continues from Griffiths' report:

'He explained that in half-an-hour we should move through and take a table in the front of the buffet where a Gendarme officer would come and join us in trying out some more of the new wine. When the train came in the Gendarme officer would walk up the platform with me and see me to my carriage. It was hoped that his presence would stop anyone questioning me. I couldn't help but think of the terrific risk the Gendarme officer was taking if I was caught but personal risks meant nothing to a Frenchman in those days.

'My drinking companions in this back room bar were the cause of the desultory firing which I had heard the evening before. They had hidden their arms and were going to leave the town that night. Meanwhile knowing of my presence they had come along to "see me off." I didn't know what the exact scheme was but I was assured that even if I was arrested on the platform I should not be taken to the jail without a rescue attempt being carried out. I suspected that they were carrying hand-grenades in their pockets like the last Maquis outfit with which I resided.'

Eventually the plan worked well despite the Gendarme and German soldiers searching even the most innocent passengers. Francoise arrived some minutes later and naturally they were not supposed to know each other. During the journey, she made a lot of noise attracting attention to herself so that Frank Griffiths would not be noticed. Sixteen and a half hours after leaving Annemasse they arrived in Toulouse.

'We gave up our tickets at the barrier', continued Griffiths in his report, 'and moved through the entrance hall for searching and interrogation. My mouth went dry. Both Germans and Gendarmes were examining people and the place was pretty full. Francoise went straight up to a Gendarme by the door and spoke to him in a loud voice. Everybody's attention was attracted to her. Soon she was throwing a minor attack of hysterics and everybody had crowded round her to see what was going on. It was my cue. A door on the right was open so I slipped through it into the left-luggage office, past a Gendarme at the far end, and out into the street. I don't know why the Gendarme didn't stop me. Perhaps he thought that I had already been interrogated or maybe he was one of Francoise's confederates.

'I waited out in the street. There were plenty of people about but no sign of Francoise yet. I kept an eye on the entrance hall and after a while I heard her voice cursing away and she emerged from the doorway. Her theme of protest this time was the indignity of having to be searched at her age — an innocent old woman who never did anybody any harm. And her bag was stuffed with stolen tobacco and other good things from her Maquis friends from Haute Savoie. She had got away without being searched only through her magnificent acting. How she could rant and rave! Most French women are pretty good at it but I don't think anyone could beat Francoise.'

Griffiths stayed for four days in the villa with Francoise, Therese and an American B-17 tail-gunner, Joe, who was going to cross the border with him. On Wednesday, October 27 they took the train with Francoise to Perpignan. When they arrived at Perpignan station, Francoise introduced them to their next contact.

'Down one of the side streets near the station,' wrote Griffiths, 'she dropped back and said "See that man ahead of you reading

The grave of the six crew members in Meythet Communal Cemetery, Haute Savoie, after their burial by the French villagers.

When the Army Graves Service erected a temporary marker, only Pilot Officer Peters was mentioned by name. (The number is a grave reference and not Peters' serial which was 149158).

However the local Abbe had kept a detailed record of the position in which each coffin had been buried with a record of the identifiable articles and markings found on each body.

the paper. Follow him. Goodbye. Good Luck. Don't shake hands.'' and that was the last of Francoise. We had made our new contact. I was sorry not to say goodbye properly and thank her for all that they had done but c'est la guerre.

'The man with the newspaper strolled very slowly along the streets. He appeared to be reading all the time but once I saw him look back to make sure that we were following.'

He was Antoine and he led them on a ten-hour hike during the night until they reached his uncle's farm, twenty kilometres from the frontier. At the farm they met Paul, the guide who was going to lead them through the frontier. At 7.00 p.m. on the 28th they left the farm for the actual border crossing with Paul. After a four-and-a-half-hour walk they arrived near the frontier.

'We could now see the top of the mountain which Paul said was the frontier. There was a very small group of buildings right near the top which we circumnavigated and we climbed the rest of the way to the top of the col. I noticed that we crossed right over the peak and made no attempt to cut over the shoulder or through a valley. On the very top we paused and hid in the rocks. It was thrilling. There below us were the lights of Spain. How strange to see a country without blackout (for Switzerland had blackout forced upon them). Paul said that we were now slap on the frontier and that in one hour we should be at our destination. It was now 6.00 a.m. He added that if anything went wrong now and we had to scatter we should try and lie up in cover in daylight and walk the next night across country heading south, keeping off the roads and passing between the villages which would be clearly visible by their lights. On the second day we should be out of the Zone Interdit and able to travel in daylight without getting caught. That's what he thought but then he was from France and couldn't be expected to know any better.

'We started off down the mountain which was only 3,000 feet high at the point where we crossed.'

They walked until they reached Figueras where, being too tired to have a clear apprehension of dangers, they decided to catch a train to Barcelona.

'We waited on the platform about five yards apart.' explained Griffiths, 'So that it should not appear that we were travelling in company. The platform was now full of uniformed officials. I did not like it. There were Guardia Civil and Franco police with the light grey uniforms. A Franco policeman looked at me once or twice and then the train arrived. Thank God we should be out of this place in a few minutes. I moved forward to mount the train and Joe closed up to me saying, ''Dis guy's got his eye on us.'' It was too late. The policeman laid hands on both of us and asked for our identity cards. Joe showed him his ''dogtags'' and I showed him my identity disc. It was no good. Without being at all excited the policeman told us to come along with him.

When the Commonwealth War Graves Commission took over responsibility for the grave, they felt that permanent maintenance at Meythet could not be assured and they wrote to the next of kin accordingly. Permission was received to transfer the remains of four crewmen to the British war graves plot at St. Germain-au-Mont d'or Communal Cemetery Extension, twenty kilometres north of Lyon. Today only Flying Officer Congdon and Flight Sergeant Pollard remain in the grave at Meythet.

The train went off without us. The policeman asked for our tickets and took them to the booking office where he had the money refunded. He gave it to me and at the time I thought it rather decent of him.

'We strolled slowly up the town with the policeman. I had informed him that I was an Inglese and that Joe was Americano. He asked if we were aviators and we told him yes. As we strolled up the main street we saw a Spanish army officer in all the glory of his uniform. Joe said to me ''Gee, look at that General'', and the policeman, who spoke only Spanish, said ''No-un Capitan, Senores''. He seemed most concerned that we should get the ranks right.'

Thereafter they spent a month in the Spanish jail at Figueras. Frank Griffiths still retains today a vivid memory of this month — the dirtiness, the stupidity and also the misery of the Franco state.

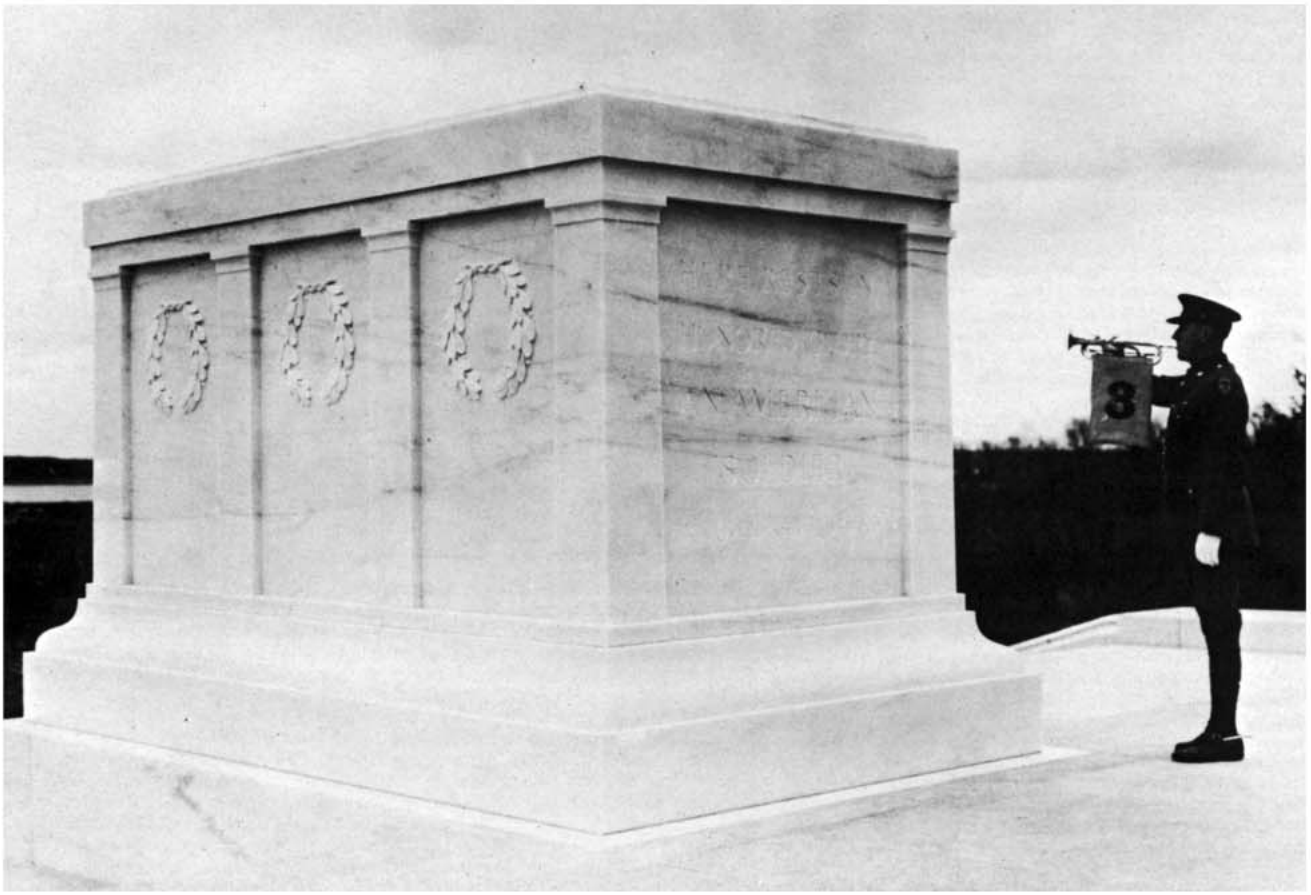
Back in England

Finally they were released for the last stage of the journey by train to Gibraltar.

'On the night of November 29, we took off in a Warwick aircraft at 2.00 a.m. and I slept solidly till 7.00 a.m. What a treat it was to lie back and not have to bother about navigation, fuel consumptions and what the weather was like at the other end. I was just thinking how perhaps aviation had come to stay if passenger travelling was going to be as comfortable as this when there was a mighty explosion and a flash. I felt sure we had been hit by flak from a Jerry destroyer. The crew started tearing up floorboards and looking into the luggage compartment (the bomb rack bay). They thought that perhaps someone had some explosive substance in his luggage. Then they thought that it might be a flash back from the batteries. One or two of the passengers started to sort out their parachutes but after a while it appeared that nothing was on fire and the aircraft was flying normally. We were about 8,000 feet at the time over the Bay of Biscay.

'Soon the Scillies came into view and at 0900 hours just seven hours after take off we landed at Lyneham. The first part of the landing was quite normal and then at the moment of touch down the crew up forward were deeply concerned and surprised when the nose of the aircraft dropped off on the runway. Apparently we had been struck by lightning at the time of the explosion and the nose of the Warwick, which is detachable, had been made even more detachable than usual by the action of the lightning on the securing clips! The pressure of the airstream had been all that had kept it in position while we were flying and as soon as our airspeed had dropped on the runway the nose had come under the influence of our old enemy gravity and fallen off.

'Finally, after innumerable interviews in London I was eventually granted 21 days leave!'



AMERICA'S UNKNOWN SOLDIERS

World War I

Above: **Staff Sergeant Frank Witchie, 3rd Cavalry, Fort Myer, Virginia, sounds 'Taps' at the tomb of the First World War Unknown Soldier on April 12, 1932. He had also sounded 'Taps' at the burial on November 11, 1921 (National Archives).**

The idea of honouring all the unknown dead of a nation, by the selection of just one unknown serviceman, originated in Europe in the aftermath of the First World War. England paid such honours on November 11, 1920 *(see After the Battle No. 6)* in the company of France and Italy and other European nations soon followed.

The commanding general of American forces in France, Brigadier General William D. Connor, learned of the French project while it was still in the planning stage. Favourably impressed, he proposed a similar project for the United States to the Army Chief of Staff, General Peyton C. March, on October 29, 1919.

That General March disapproved General Connor's proposal is suggested by the Chief of Staff's later reply to Mrs. M. M. Melony, editor of the *Delineator,* who made a similar suggestion. General March explained to Mrs. Melony that while the French and English had many unknown dead, it appeared possible that the Army Graves Registration Service eventually would identify all American dead. Furthermore, the United States had no burial place for a fallen hero similar to Westminster Abbey or the Arc de Triomphe. In any case, March pointed out, the matter was one for Congress to decide.

On December 21, 1920 (following the British and French dedications), Congressman Hamilton Fish, Jr., of New York introduced a resolution calling for the return to the United States of an unknown American soldier killed in France and his burial with appropriate ceremonies in a tomb to be constructed at the Memorial Amphitheater in Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, D.C. The measure was approved on March 4, 1921 as Public Resolution 67 of the 66th Congress. It included a provision for the construction of the tomb of the unknown soldier at Arlington National Cemetery. As then established, the tomb was to be a simple structure that eventually would serve as the base for an appropriate monument. Congressman Fish wanted the burial ceremony for the unknown soldier to be held on Memorial Day, May 28, 1921 but, on February 12, while the bill was still before the Senate Committee on Military Affairs, Secretary of War Newton D. Baker informed the committee that the date was premature. He had been advised by the Quartermaster General, who would be in charge of selecting and preparing the body of the unknown soldier, that only 1,237 American dead were still unidentified and that the cases of almost all of these were being investigated. Haste, the Quartermaster General had pointed out, could result in the burial of a body which might later be identified.

Congressman Fish tried again through the new Secretary of War, John W. Weeks, (who replaced Baker on March 4, 1921 when President Warren G. Harding took office), to arrange the ceremony, this time for May 31. But Secretary Weeks upheld Baker's earlier view for the same reasons and chose Armistice Day, 1921, the third anniversary of the war's end, as the appropriate time to conduct the services. In response to this choice, Congress, declared November 11, 1921 a legal holiday to honour all those who participated in World War I.

On September 9, 1921 the Quartermaster General received orders from the US War Department to select an unknown soldier from those buried in France. According to plans, the selection ceremony was to take place at Chalons-sur-Marne, ninety miles east of Paris, on October 23, 1921.

Sergeant Edward Younger, from the American Forces of Occupation in Germany, selected the US Unknown Soldier of the First World War at Chalons-sur-Marne on October 24, 1921.

After a final search of the records of unknown dead for any evidence of identity, special Quartermaster Corps teams chose four bodies to be exhumed and four others were selected as alternatives should the exhumation of any of the first four reveal evidence of identity.

The body of an unidentified American was exhumed from each of four American cemeteries (out of the eight then existing) — Aisne-Marne, Meuse-Argonne, Somme and St. Mihiel — on October 22, 1921. Each was examined to ensure that the person had been a member of the American Expeditionary Forces, that he had died of wounds received in combat, and that there were no clues to his identity whatsoever. After mortuary preparation, the bodies were placed in identical caskets and shipping cases. The next day they were carried by truck to Chalons-sur-Marne.

At 3.00 p.m. on October 23, all four caskets arrived by truck at the city hall of Chalons-sur-Marne. Awaiting them was a large delegation of French and American officials. Members of the American Quartermaster Corps and town officials had prepared the city hall for the selection ceremony. The outside of the building was decorated with French and American flags; inside, the aisles and corridors were ornamented with palms, potted trees and flags, and a catafalque had been constructed and set up in the main hall. Another room was decorated for the reception of the four unknown soldiers and a third was prepared for the ceremony in which the chosen unknown soldier was to be transferred to a different casket *(see fig. 1)*.

French troops carried the shipping cases from the trucks into the reception room of the city hall. The caskets were then removed, set on top of the cases, and draped with American flags. A French guard of honour stood watch until 10.00 p.m. when six American pallbearers arrived from Headquarters, American Forces in Germany, at Koblenz. From this time on, a combined American-French guard maintained constant vigil.

Early on the morning of October 24, Major Robert P. Harbold, (the Quartermaster officer in charge) aided by French and American soldiers, rearranged the caskets so that each rested on a shipping case other than the one in which it had arrived. There was now little chance that someone would know even the cemetery from which an unidentified body came. Major Harbold then chose Sergeant Edward F. Younger of Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 50th Infantry, American Forces in Germany, to select the unknown soldier. Originally, a commissioned officer was to do the choosing, but Major General Harry L. Rogers, the Quartermaster General, had changed the plans after learning that the French had designated an enlisted man to choose their unknown soldier.

Before the selection a French military band formed in the city hall courtyard adjoining the reception room. The ceremony began as General Duport, commanding the French VI Army Corps, led French and American officers and French civil officials to the entrance of the reception room. After General Duport and General Rogers made brief speeches, Sergeant Younger led the way from the main hall, carrying a spray of white roses presented by a Frenchman who had lost two sons in the war. As the French band in the courtyard played a hymn, Younger walked around the caskets several times before placing the roses on one to indicate his selection. (The roses remained there and were buried with the unknown American in Washington).

Following this ceremony the pallbearers, all Army non-commissioned officers from American units in Germany, moved the casket to the second room where Mr. Keating, the chief supervising embalmer, in the presence of General Rogers, Colonel Harry F. Rethers (Chief of the American Graves Registration

Above: **French soldiers unload one of the four caskets outside the Hotel de Ville on Sunday, October 23, 1921 (National Archives).** *Below:* **We visited Chalons-sur-Marne on the US Memorial Day, Monday, May 28, 1979.**

The main hall of the Hotel de Ville today. The catafalque stood in the centre ready to receive the chosen casket. This then remained lying-in-state from 1.00 p.m. until 4.00 p.m. on October 24. A plaque recording the event was erected just prior to the outbreak of the Second World War on the wall behind the pillar.

The transfer room marked B on the plan. Where the chosen body was switched to a special casket sent from the United States engraved: 'An Unknown American who gave his life in the World War'.

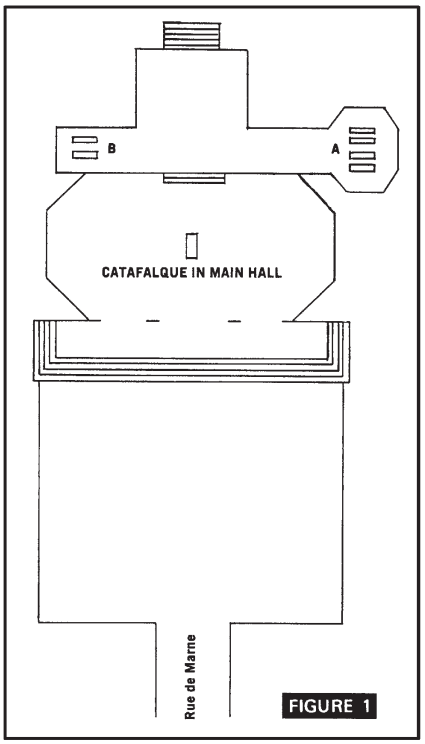


FIGURE 1

The reception room (A on plan) where the actual selection ceremony took place. As a French military band played 'The Death of Ase' from Peer Gynt, Sergeant Younger chose the third casket from the left.

Service in Europe), Lieutenant Colonel William G. Ball of the Quartermaster Corps and Major Harbold, transferred the body to a special casket brought from the United States. This casket was then sealed. The empty casket was returned to the reception room where one of the three remaining bodies was placed in it so that the casket could not be identified. The caskets of the three remaining unknown Americans were then placed in shipping cases and at 11.00 a.m. were put aboard trucks that took them to Meuse-Argonne Cemetery, 152 miles east of Paris, for immediate burial.

The casket containing the selected remains was draped with an American flag and carried in procession to the catafalque in the main hall. The spray of roses lay on top of the casket and floral tributes were banked around it. An honour guard of six French and five American soldiers and a uniformed representative of the American Legion took post. After the press had been admitted to photograph the catafalque, the room was opened to the public.

The departure ceremony opened late in the afternoon of October 24, with speeches by the mayor of Chalons-sur-Marne and by Major General Henry T. Allen, who came especially for the occasion from Germany where he commanded American forces. The American body bearers then carried the casket of the Unknown Soldier out of the city hall. While the French military band played 'Aux Champs' and the escort troops presented arms, the body bearers placed the casket on a caisson. Boy Scouts picked up the flowers that had surrounded the catafalque and took positions near the caisson. After General Allen, General Rogers, Colonel Rethers, General Duport and other officials joined the cortege, the procession moved to the railway station.

At the station the band played the American national anthem while the body bearers transferred the Unknown Soldier from the caisson to the funeral car of the special train. The train left Chalons-sur-Marne at 6.10 p.m. and arrived in Paris three hours later, where it remained overnight.

The following day the special train left Paris and reached Le Havre about 1.00 p.m. On hand to escort the Unknown Soldier to the docks were representatives of the French and American governments, an American Army honour guard, a large contingent of French Army troops, a French Army band, a detachment of French sailors, representatives of various French societies and associations, and mounted Gendarmes. Thirty French soldiers removed the floral pieces from the train and took position in the column for the procession to the docks. The American body bearers then carried the casket from the funeral car and placed it on a waiting caisson while the band played "Aux Champs" and French school children showered the caisson with flowers. The procession then started for the Pier d'Escale where the cruiser USS *Olympia, (see After the Battle No. 12)* Admiral Dewey's old flagship, waited to take the Unknown Soldier to the United States. En route via the Boulevard Strasbourg, the procession stopped briefly at the city hall where members of the city council presented a wreath.

At the pier, after speeches by American and French officials and the presentation of the Croix de Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur to the Unknown Soldier by M. Maginot, (the French Minister of Pensions who later inspired the Maginot Line), the body bearers carried the casket to the *Olympia.* A group of American marines on the dock presented arms, and the cruiser's band played the French and American national anthems and Chopin's 'Funeral March' as six sailors and two marines relieved the Army body bearers and carried the casket aboard ship.

The *Olympia,* escorted by the American destroyer *Rueben James* (later the first American warship to be sunk in World War II) and eight French naval vessels, put out to sea at 3.20 p.m. She received a 17-gun salute as she cleared the harbour and another as the French escort ships dropped astern just outside French territory.

On a rainy November 9, the *Olympia* sailed up the Potomac River, receiving and returning salutes from military posts along the way, and docked at the Washington Navy Yard. On hand to receive the body of the Unknown Soldier were General Bandholtz, who was the escort commander; the 3rd Cavalry and its mounted band from Fort Myer, Virginia together with military and civil officials, including the Army Chief of Staff, General of the Armies John J. Pershing.

After the Navy buglers aboard the *Olympia* sounded attention, a body bearer detail of marines and sailors from the ship's company

Graves 1, 2 and 3 in Row 1, Block G at the Meuse-Argonne American Military Cemetery at Romagne-sous-Montfaucon containing the remains of the three bodies not selected. According to American custom, the graves are decorated with miniature flags for Memorial Day, 1979.

carried the casket to the gang plank. Simultaneously, the cruiser commenced firing minute guns and the ship's band began to play Chopin's 'Funeral March' and the boatswain piped the Unknown Soldier ashore in the fashion accorded a full admiral. On the dock the civil dignitaries removed their hats as the troops saluted. When the Navy procession cleared the foot of the gang plank, it halted and the boatswain sounded his pipe to signify that the party had left the ship. The ship's band then ceased playing the funeral march, a marine bugler sounded four flourishes, and the ship's band played the national anthem.

At the close of the anthem, the *Olympia*'s band resumed the funeral march while the procession moved to a draped caisson standing between two squadrons of cavalry. The ceremony ended as eight Army body bearers from the 3rd Cavalry took the casket from the ship's detail and placed it on the caisson.

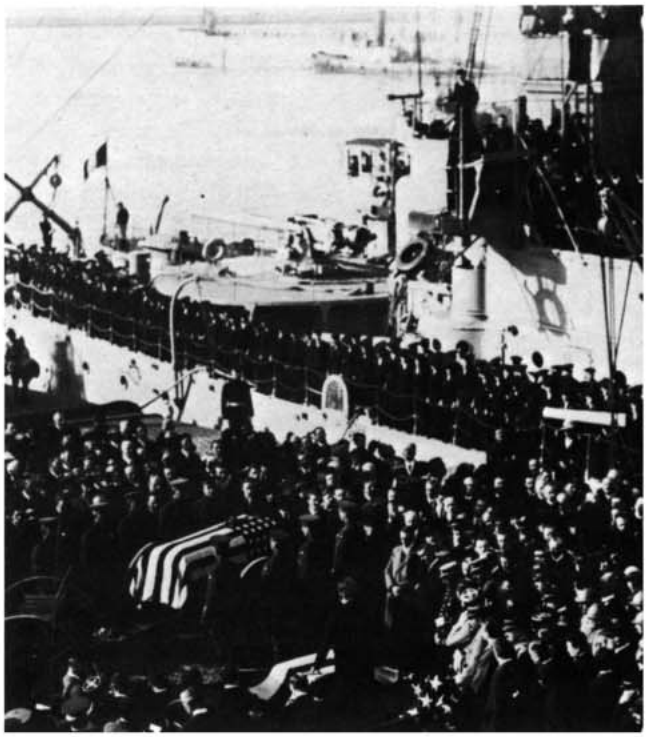
The cavalry band playing 'Onward Christian Soldiers' led the procession to the Capitol. Once outside the Washington Navy Yard the procession moved via M Street and New Jersey Avenue to the East Plaza of the Capitol. When the horse-drawn caisson arrived at the Capitol steps the Army body bearers removed the casket and carried it past the honour cordon and into the Rotunda. There it was placed on the Lincoln catafalque with the foot of the casket to the west.

Shortly thereafter, the American President Warren G. Harding with Mrs. Harding walked up the east steps and entered the Rotunda. Mrs. Harding placed a wide, white band of ribbon, which she had made herself, on the casket. President Harding then stepped forward, pinned a silver National Shield with forty-eight gold stars to the ribbon, and placed a great wreath of crimson roses on the casket. Other wreaths were laid by military and civil dignitaries before they departed leaving the guard of honour to maintain vigil throughout the night.

In preparation for receiving the public on the following day, Capitol employees on the evening of the 9th roped off areas in the Rotunda which would channel the crowds as they entered from the east, moved past the bier and continued out the west door. Also at that time the casket was turned around so that its foot was to the east. With this change the

Above: **The flag-draped casket is carried from the Hotel de Ville to be taken by gun carriage to the railway station for the journey to Le Havre (National Archives).** *Below:* **In 1959 the railed statue of French President Carnot was removed to a new site facing the prefecture to provide car-parking space. The Germans had previously removed and melted down the bronze sculptures in 1940.**

Left: **On reaching Le Havre railway station, the cortege route ran along the Boulevard de Strasbourg to the Hotel de Ville. After a brief pause, the procession continued via the Rue de Paris, des Drapiers, du General Faudherbe and the Quai de Bostrom.** *Above:* **We discovered this picture had been taken on the Rue de Paris with the Place August Peret in the background.**



Left: **After leaving the Quai de Bostrom, the cortege turned right along the Quai d'Escale where the Olympia was berthed.** *Above:* **The wharf was renamed Quai Roger Meunier in 1960. A new lighthouse now stands beside the Avant Port in the background.**

body bearers would not have to manoeuvre for correct position when taking the Unknown Soldier from the Rotunda and could carry the casket straight out the east door.

The public was admitted to the Rotunda at 8.00 a.m. on November 10 and by midnight, when the Rotunda was closed, some 90,000 persons had passed the bier.

Of eight body bearers selected to handle the casket, five were Army non-commissioned officers, two were Navy petty officers, and one was a Marine Corps non-commissioned officer. At 8.00 a.m. on November 11, the body bearers carried the casket of the Unknown Soldier from the Rotunda and down the east steps to the caisson. At the foot of the east steps of the Capitol four body bearers, flanked on the outside by six honorary pallbearers, took station on each side of the caisson as General Bandholtz, the escort commander, led the way toward Pennsylvania Avenue for the march to Arlington National Cemetery.

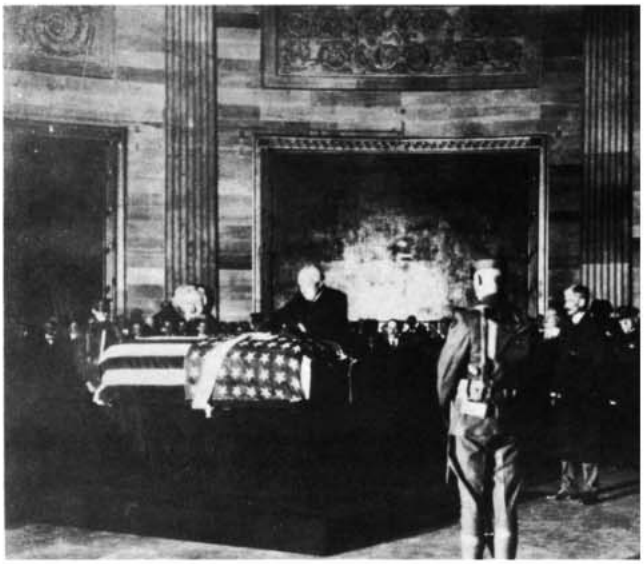
Included in the long cortege of military and civil leaders marched a column of soldiers who had received the Medal of Honor. All holders of this highest military award had been invited to participate, but only those who had won it in World War I were invited at government expense. The Medal of Honor winners marched eight abreast, ranging from front to rear according to the dates of their medals, those holding the oldest medals leading. (It was behind this group that the carriage bearing former President Wilson joined the procession, having missed his correct place earlier in the cortege).

The procession moved along Pennsylvania Avenue to 15th Street, on 15th Street to Pennsylvania Avenue again, past the White House to M Street, then on M Street to Aqueduct Bridge (which was slightly upstream from the present Francis Scott Key Bridge). When the column reached the White House, it stopped briefly while President Harding, Vice President Coolidge, Chief Justice Taft and the other justices of the Supreme Court, and members of the cabinet, Senate, and House of Representatives left the procession to travel by car to Arlington National Cemetery. They took a separate route via Highway Bridge at 14th Street and entered the cemetery through Treasury Gate. President Harding was almost late for the cemetery ceremonies; his car was caught in a tight traffic jam and only by cutting across an open field was he able to arrive on time.

The main procession marched to Aqueduct Bridge where the clergy dropped out and continued by car to the cemetery. The US Army Band also left the procession at the bridge and was replaced for the remainder of the march by the US Marine Band. Upon reaching the cemetery's Arlington (Fort Myer) Gate, the cavalry squadron, field artillery battalion (less one firing battery), and machine gun company of the infantry battalion left the column and paraded on a drill ground facing the cemetery. As the Marine Band played a funeral march, the procession moved through the cemetery to the west entrance of the Memorial Amphitheater, reaching it about three hours after leaving the Capitol.

The military escort, except for the artillery battery, drew up on line facing the amphitheatre, presented arms, and held the salute while the caisson was brought to the entrance and the casket was carried to the apse inside the amphitheatre.

Over 5,000 tickets had been distributed by the office of The Adjutant General for admission to the Memorial Amphitheater. (Since the number of tickets exceeded the seating capacity of the amphitheatre, it is



Left: **November 9, 1921. President Warren G. Harding pins a National Shield onto Mrs. Harding's sash as the Unknown Soldier lies in state in the Rotunda of the Capitol, one of the high spots in a tour of the building today,** *photo above* **(US Army). All comparison photographs in Washington by David O. Hale.**

Above: **The casket leaves the east door of the Capitol for the journey to Arlington National Cemetery (National Archives).** *Below:* **Extensive reconstruction work carried out in 1958-61 changed the aspect of the East Front against the protests of traditionalists. The mid-section was moved forward, a 32½ ft extension added and the sandstone replaced with marble (Office of the Architect of the Capitol).**

apparent that not all persons invited were expected to attend). The ceremony began as soon as President Harding arrived at 11.55 a.m. The Marine Band opened the ceremony with the national anthem which was followed by the invocation, delivered by the Army Chief of Chaplains, Colonal John T. Axton. After a bugler sounded attention three times, the assemblage observed a two-minute silence.

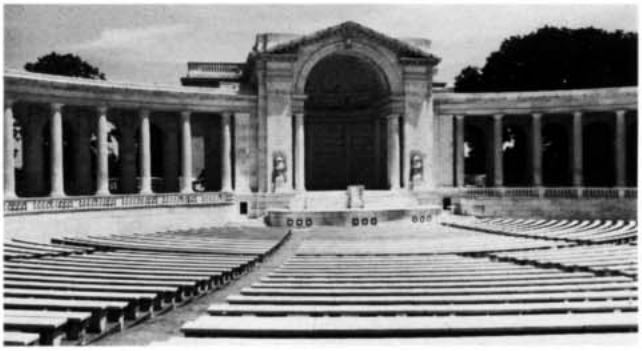
At the conclusion of the period of silence the audience, accompanied by the band, sang 'America'. President Harding then delivered an address, paying tribute to the Unknown Soldier and pleading for an end to war. After a hymn, sung by a quartet from the Metropolitan Opera Company, the President placed upon the casket of the Unknown Soldier the Medal of Honor and the Distinguished Service Cross. High-ranking representatives of other countries also presented awards, some of which never before had been given to a foreigner.

In preparation for the burial service, the Marine Band moved out of the amphitheatre to a position near the tomb. The band played 'Our Honored Dead' as the casket, preceded by the clergy, was moved in procession from the apse and placed in the tomb. Following the casket were President and Mrs. Harding; Vice President and Mrs. Coolidge; Mrs. R. Emmett Digney, who was the president of the American National War Mothers and who had lost a son in the war and Mrs. Julia McCudden, who represented the British War Mothers and who had lost three sons.

Bishop Brent read the burial service. Congressman Fish, who had introduced the original legislation next came forward and laid a wreath at the tomb. Among the many others who then offered tribute was Chief Plenty Coups, Chief of the Crow Nation. Representing all American Indians, he laid his war bonnet and coup stick at the tomb.

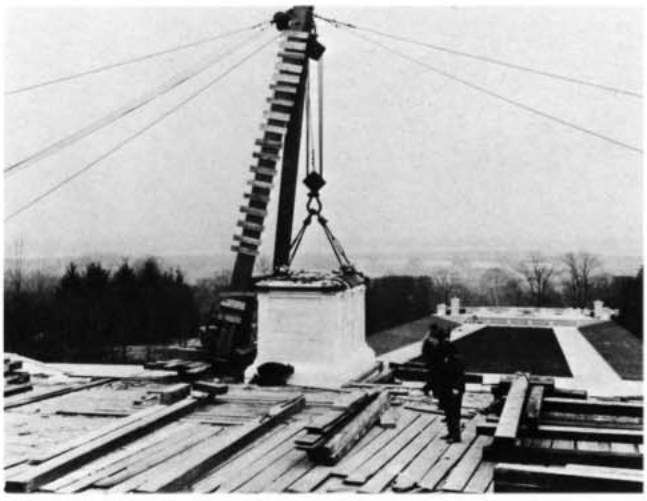
The saluting battery then fired three salvos as the casket was lowered into the crypt, the bottom of which had been covered with a layer of soil from France. The bugler sounded taps, and after the last note the battery fired twenty-one guns in final salute to the Unknown Soldier of World War I.

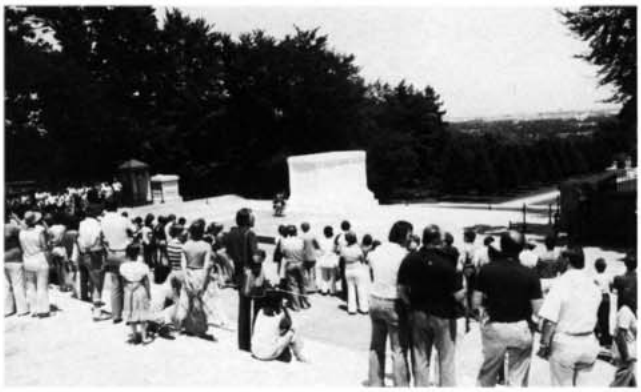
Left: **Passing the National Theatre on Pennsylvania Avenue since rebuilt** *(photo above)* **(National Archives).**



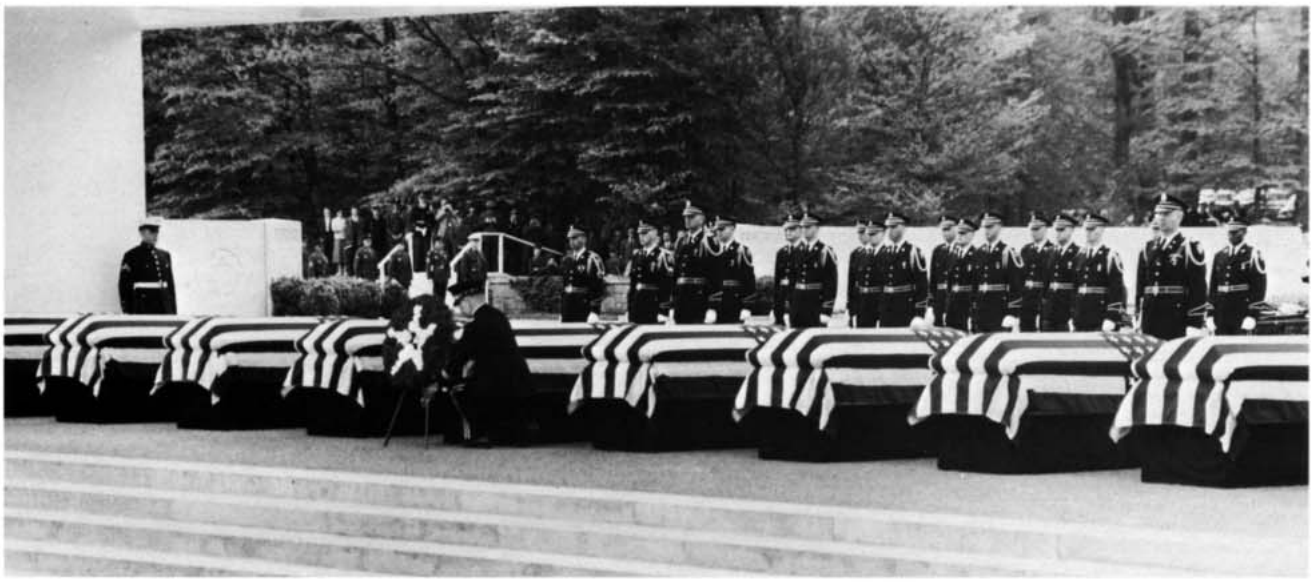
The Memorial Amphitheater packed to capacity. President Harding places the Medal of Honor on the casket. The amphitheatre was built during the First World War following pleas from the Grand Army of the Republic in 1912. An inscribed quotation by Abraham Lincoln reads: 'Let us here highly resolve that these honored dead shall not have died in vain.

President Calvin Coolidge placing a wreath on the tomb on May 30, 1927. The simple stone sarcophagus remained until 1934.





December 1934 saw the completion of the tomb by the addition of the $50,000 50-ton block of Colorado marble authorised by Congress in 1926. The bas relief carving was completed after it was set in position (US Army).



World War II and Korea

Following the end of the Second World War, another Congressman, the Honorable Melvin Price, of Illinois, following the example of Congressman Fish after the earlier conflict, sponsored a bill to authorise the selection and burial in Arlington Cemetery of an American unknown soldier from World War II. In June 1946, the US Congress passed Public Law 429 approving the bill but it was not until July 23, 1948 that the Department of the Army issued orders calling for the selection of the unknown serviceman. By March 15, 1951, it had been decided that the body of one unidentified serviceman was to be chosen from each of the following: the European area, the Far East area, the Mediterranean zone, the Pacific area and the former Africa-Middle East zone. The bodies were to be brought to Washington by May 28, 1951, when the President was to choose the unknown serviceman to be honoured.

Over the next two years changes were made in the orders and it was decided that an unknown serviceman would also be brought from the Alaska Command. Also the unknown serviceman was not to be chosen in Washington but at Independence Hall in Philadelphia. The selection was to be made, not by the President, but by one of five representatives of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard, each of whom had received the highest award of his service during World War II. The method of choosing the selector was to be decided by the five services and the selection ceremony was now scheduled for May 26, 1951. However all these plans were cancelled upon the outbreak of hostilities in Korea in June 1950.

Interest in the project was revived after the Korean War. In August 1955, largely at the urging of various veterans' organisations, Secretary of Defense Charles E. Wilson asked the Department of the Army to proceed with plans to select an unknown serviceman of World War II. A year later, on August 3, 1956, the 84th Congress enacted Public Law 975, a measure also sponsored by Congressman Price of Illinois, authorizing the burial of an unknown serviceman from the Korean War in Arlington National Cemetery.

The Department of the Army drafted new, simplified plans for selecting the unknown servicemen of World War II and the Korean War. All services would participate. The Air

The choice of additional Unknown Soldiers to represent the Second World War and the Korean War was not welcomed by some American servicemen. They felt the WWI tomb was a perfect, symbolic memorial as it stood. *Above:* **General O'Neill selects the body to represent the Unknown from Europe and Africa at Epinal on May 12, 1958 (US Army).**

Master Sergeant Ned Lyle, 25th Infantry Division, US Army in Hawaii, salutes after selecting the Unknown Soldier of the Korean War at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, Oahu, where all the unknown remains from that war are interred (US Army).

Above: **Colonel Glenn T. Eagleston, 313th Air Division, selects the casket at Hickam Air Force Base, Honolulu, to go forward as the representative from the Pacific theatre for World War II (US Army).**

Force was to choose one of the unknown war dead to represent the transpacific phase of World War II and the Army was to choose one to represent the transatlantic phase. The Navy was then to select just one of these two and transport the body to Washington for burial. At the same time, the Navy was to bring one of the unknown dead of the Korean War who was to be selected by the Army in Hawaii.

Secretary of Defense Wilson approved the Department of the Army plan on December 31, 1956 and directed that two of the unknown dead of World War II buried overseas be selected with appropriate ceremonies by May 15, 1958. The Commander in Chief, US Army, Europe, was to select one from the European theatre and the Far East Air Forces one from the Pacific. A naval officer, to be designated by the Chief of Naval Operations, was to choose the World War II unknown serviceman from the two. All selections were to be made outside the United States, the Navy's part in the proceedings to take place at sea.

The Commanding General, US Army, Pacific, was meanwhile to select in Hawaii an unknown serviceman of the Korean War. The Navy was then to transport both Unknown Soldiers to Washington when, after a joint funeral, both were to be buried in Arlington National Cemetery next to the Unknown Soldier of World War I.

By August 15, 1957 all sites for the various ceremonies had been chosen. One result of the planning was a decision that two sunken crypts, rather than new tombs, would be prepared for the unknown dead. Construction of the crypts was begun on November 12, 1957.

While planning was under way in Washington, the selection process began overseas. The body of an unknown American serviceman who had fought in the transatlantic phase of World War II was exhumed from each of the thirteen US cemeteries in Europe and Africa and shipped in identical caskets to the US cemetery at Epinal, France. On May 12, Major General Edward J. O'Neill, representing the Commander in Chief, US Army, Europe, chose one of these; the others were reburied. The casket selected

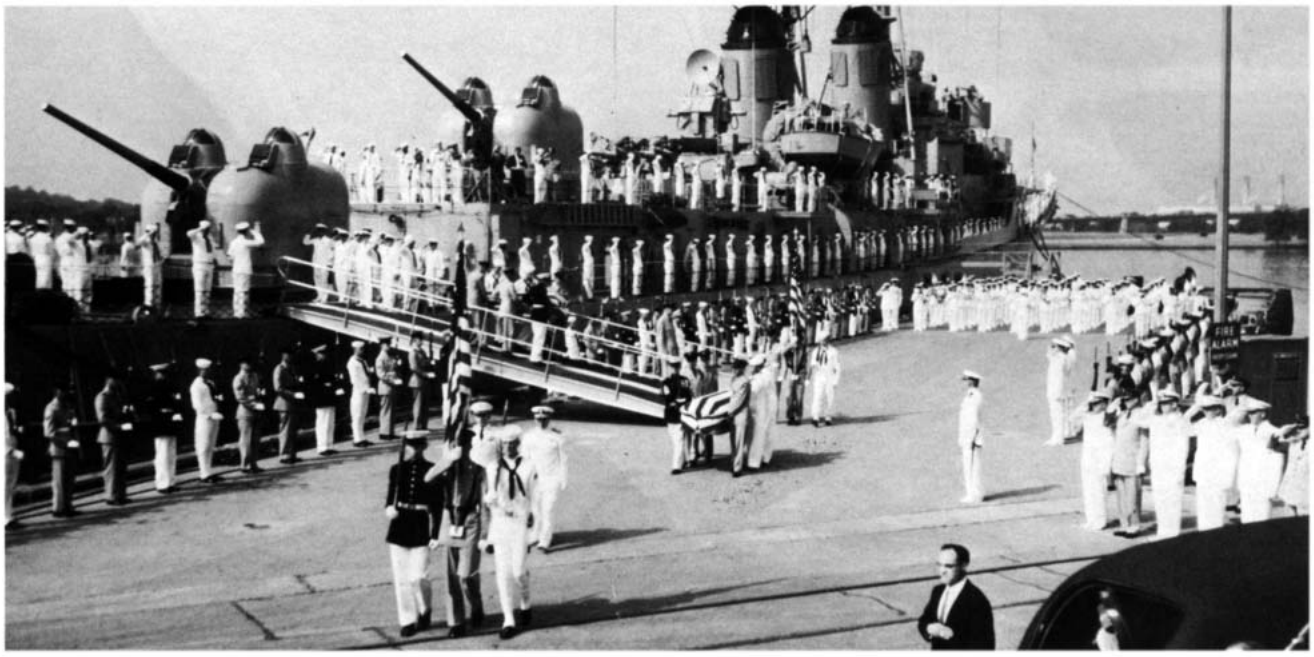
The twelve servicemen from the European Theater of Operations not selected were reburied at the US military cemetery at Epinal.

was flown to Naples, Italy, where it was transferred to the USS *Blandy*, an Atlantic Fleet destroyer. The *Blandy* then left Naples to rendezvous with the missile cruiser USS *Canberra* off the Virginia capes where the final choice of the unknown soldier of World War II was to be made.

In the selection of the serviceman from the Pacific theatre, the bodies of two unknown Americans were taken from the National Cemetery of the Pacific in Hawaii and four were taken from the Fort McKinley American Cemetery and Memorial in Manila. The six caskets were then moved to Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii where, on May 16, 1958, Colonel Glenn T. Eagleston, an Air Force officer, chose one. A day earlier, on May 15, the bodies of four unknown Americans killed in the Korean War were removed from the National Cemetery of the Pacific, and Master Sergeant Ned Lyle of the Army chose the one to be honoured as the unknown soldier of the Korean War. The two caskets selected were flown to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba; the others were buried in Hawaii. In Cuba the caskets were placed aboard the USS *Boston* which then sailed for the waters off the Virginia capes for the selection of the unknown soldier of World War II.

The *Blandy, Canberra,* and *Boston* rendezvoused off the Virginia capes on May 26. First the casket of the unknown serviceman

Selection of the Unknown Soldier of World War II was performed by Korean Medal of Honor winner, Hospitalman William Charette on the after-lower-missile deck of the USS Canberra. That from Korea lies between the two Second World War caskets. The remains of the serviceman on the left were buried in 113ft of water at 3657N, 7519W.



The World War II soldier precedes the Korean Unknown Soldier as the caskets are off-loaded at Pier 1 of the Naval Gun Factory Washington D.C. (US Army).

from the European theatre of World War II was transferred from the *Blandy* to the *Boston*. The two World War II dead and the Korean War dead then were transferred from the *Boston* to the *Canberra* and taken to the *Canberra*'s missile-handling room. Three morticians from Washington removed the steel caskets from their shipping cases, took turns changing the positions of the caskets bearing the two World War II dead, and transferred the bodies of all three soldiers to bronze caskets.

To open the ceremony, the *Canberra*'s band played Chopin's 'Funeral March' as white-clad sailors wearing black armbands brought the caskets on deck. The Korean War serviceman was placed directly in front of Hospital Corpsman 1st Class William R. Charette, who had won the Medal of Honor during the Korean War, and who was to choose the unknown soldier of World War II. The caskets bearing the World War II dead were placed on either side of the casket of the Korean War soldier. After brief speeches by Navy officials, Charette marched to his left around the row of caskets, saluted, then lifted a floral wreath from a nearby stand, and marched back to face the caskets astern. After glancing left, he stepped to the right, placed the wreath at the casket to denote his selection and saluted.

Following the selection ceremony, the caskets of the Korean War and World War II servicemen were transferred to the *Blandy* which, escorted by the USCG *Ingham*, sailed for the Naval Gun Factory in Washington. The World War II soldier not chosen was then prepared for burial at sea while the *Canberra* moved eight miles offshore to meet the requirements for deep sea burial. As the body was committed to the sea, the bugler sounded taps and eight marines fired three volleys. The bugler then blew release and the *Canberra* turned back toward the shore.

Plans for the Washington rites meanwhile had been completed, and between May 12 and 23 every ceremony, including one in full dress uniform, and every administrative function had been rehearsed at least twice. Some phases, such as traffic and parking control, were rehearsed four times. For the lying in state ceremony at the Capitol, the US Capitol Architect had provided the Lincoln catafalque and a second, identical in dimensions and drapings, that had been built at Fort Myer under supervision of the Military District of Washington. The two crypts at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier also had been completed.

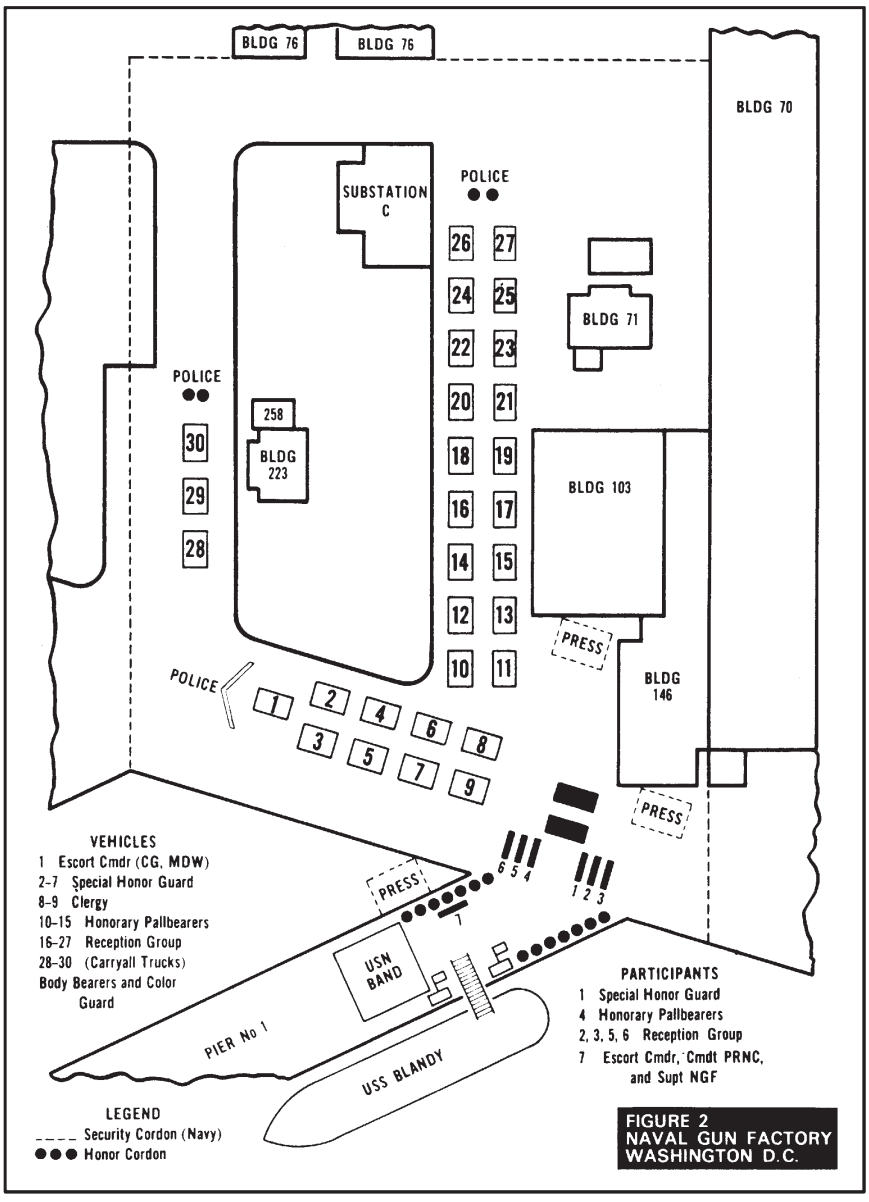
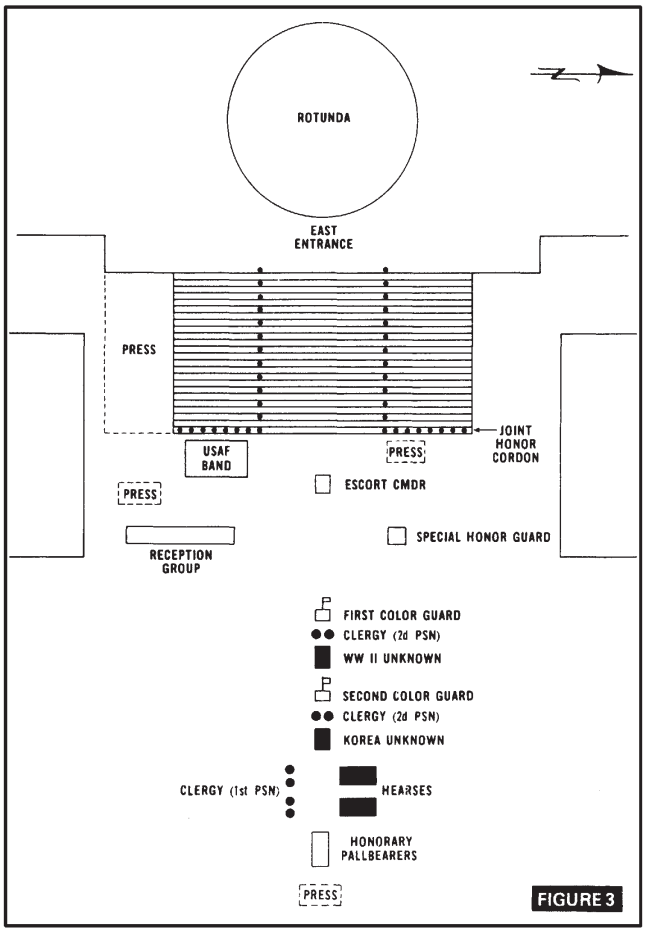


FIGURE 2
NAVAL GUN FACTORY
WASHINGTON D.C.

Arrival at the Rotunda. The Air Force band has just played four ruffles and flourishes. Figure 3 *(right)* illustrates the order of the procession (US Army).



The *Blandy* arrived at the Naval Gun Factory at 12.35 p.m. on May 27, 1958. She was moored stern in, starboard side to the south edge of Pier 1. A special gang plank was installed and other ceremonial fittings were erected. The caskets of the two unknown servicemen, accompanied by a guard of honour, then were brought from below to the ceremonial area in preparation for the reception ceremony the next day.

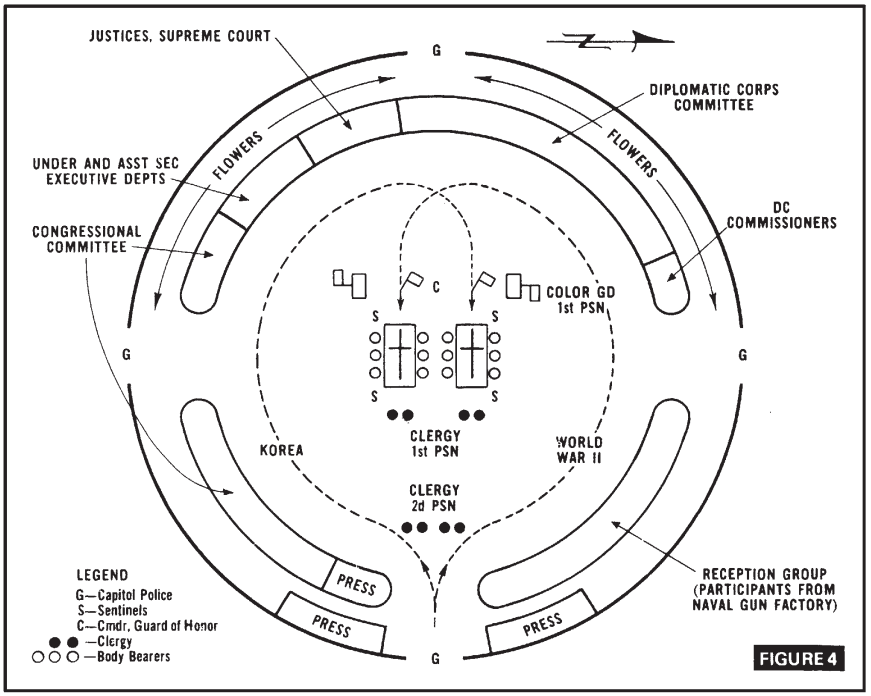
On May 28 troops and officials began to take stations for the ceremony at 8.40 a.m. Forty-five minutes later, as the Navy Band concluded the hymns, the body bearers, divided into two groups each led by two chaplains, boarded the ship to remove the caskets. All troops saluted when the bearers were in position. The Navy Band sounded four ruffles and flourishes, then played hymns as the caskets were borne from the *Blandy*; the World War II unknown soldier was taken ashore first. The caskets were carried to hearses at the end of the pier and placed inside simultaneously *(see Fig. 2)*. Following another salute, the participating dignitaries entered their vehicles and the procession started toward the Capitol. A 21-gun salute was fired by a Navy battery as the procession departed.

The procession moved up Dahlgren Avenue to M Street, then by way of M Street and New Jersey Avenue to the East Plaza of the Capitol, entering from the south at 9.44 a.m. The twelve body bearers (who had preceded the cortege under police escort to arrive in time) were already waiting at the bottom of the steps behind the colour details.

After the dignitaries had left their cars and were in place to proceed up the steps to the Rotunda, the honour guard presented arms, and the US Air Force Band sounded four ruffles and flourishes before beginning a hymn. As the hymn was played, the body bearers removed the caskets from the hearses and formed a column led by the clergy, with the unknown soldier of World War II to the front *(see Fig. 3)*. The procession passed through the joint honour cordon and, when it entered the Rotunda, divided to the right and left *(see Fig. 4)*. The caskets were then placed on the biers, the bearers were dismissed, and the first relief of the guard of honour was posted.

Vice President Richard M. Nixon, as president of the Senate, was escorted by an Army officer to a position directly in front of the caskets. An enlisted man acting as one of the wreath bearers met him and assisted him in placing a wreath at the head of the biers. Shortly after the wreath-laying ceremony ended, the public was admitted to the Rotunda.

The unknown dead lay in state from mid-morning on May 28 to 1.00 p.m. on May 30. Tributes of flowers were accepted and arranged in the Rotunda throughout this period. At mid-day on May 29 the caskets were switched so that the serviceman of the



Movement of the procession in the Rotunda (US Army).

Korean War rested on the Lincoln catafalque. At the same time, the catafalques were moved so that the World War II soldier kept the senior position on the right.

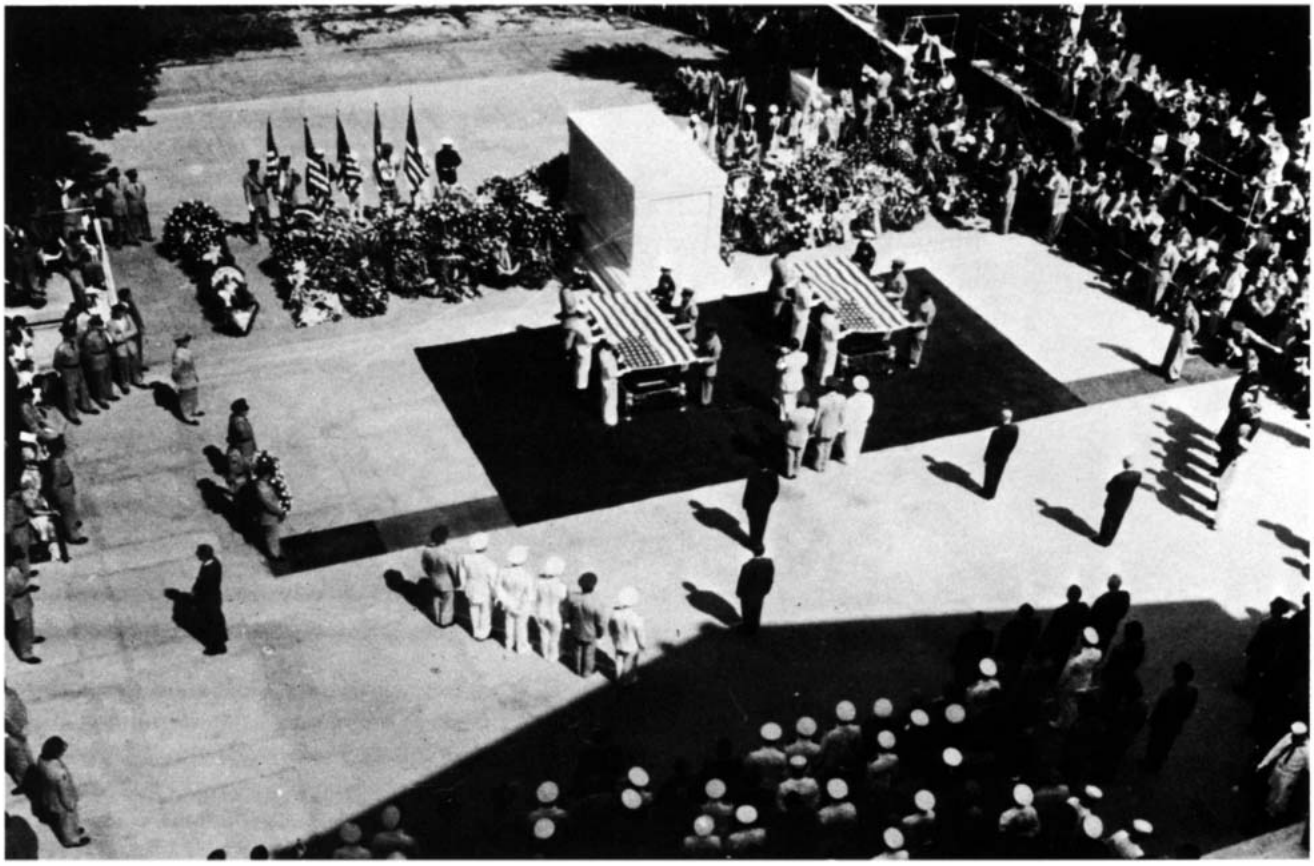
At 7.30 a.m. on May 30, in preparation for the procession the caisson detail of the 3rd Infantry left Fort Myer for the Capitol. At the same time, troops of the 3rd Infantry moved into Arlington National Cemetery to prepare for traffic and parking control. Some 250 officers and men were to occupy fifty-one posts to cope with the 14,000 cars expected. The 400 officers and men of the regiment who were to man rope and security cordons also arrived early. Some of them formed a cordon around the Memorial Amphitheater to keep the ceremonial area clear and later to direct movement from the amphitheatre to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The rest manned a rope cordon along Roosevelt Drive, the route of the procession. In all, troops manned about six miles of rope.

Twenty-four different kinds of parking stickers and seating tickets had been printed and distributed in order to allow guests to park and to be seated in the most expeditious manner. Since the cemetery lacked parking spaces for everyone, arrangements were made for shuttle buses to run between the Pentagon car parks and the amphitheatre. Of 3,000 seating tickets distributed, which approximated the capacity of the amphitheatre (unlike the WWI ceremony), all went to members of Congress, the diplomatic corps, ranking military officials, press representatives, Medal of Honor holders and veteran and patriotic groups. Both the Pentagon and the veteran's affairs adviser for the District of Columbia were besieged with requests for tickets from mothers or widows of men lost in the war — provisions had been made for mothers and widows during ceremonies for the Unknown Soldier of World War I — but all seats had already been allocated.

During the morning of May 30, a saluting battery from Headquarters, Second US Army, took station on the Washington Monument grounds where it was to fire a minute-gun salute during the entire procession and the ceremony at the cemetery, except the two minute silence. Escort units of the main procession began assembling along Delaware Avenue, N.E., just north of the Capitol, about noon; the groups that would move as part of the cortege from the Capitol were in place in the East Plaza by 12.30 p.m.)

Half-an-hour later the body bearers took up the caskets and, with those carrying the Unknown Soldier of World War II leading, moved out of the Rotunda. At the same moment, the saluting battery on the Washington Monument grounds began firing.

Once the caskets were in place, the band stopped playing and the clergy entered vehicles positioned in front of the caissons. The full procession moved via Constitution Avenue, 23rd Street, Memorial Bridge and Memorial Drive. When the procession arrived at the cemetery the caissons, which had been moving abreast, shifted into a column led by the caisson bearing the World War II Unknown Soldier. As the caissons entered the cemetery through Memorial Gate, twenty jet fighters and bombers passed overhead with one plane missing from each formation (a feature used for the first time in official US ceremonial, during the funeral for General Hoyt S. Vandenberg in 1954).



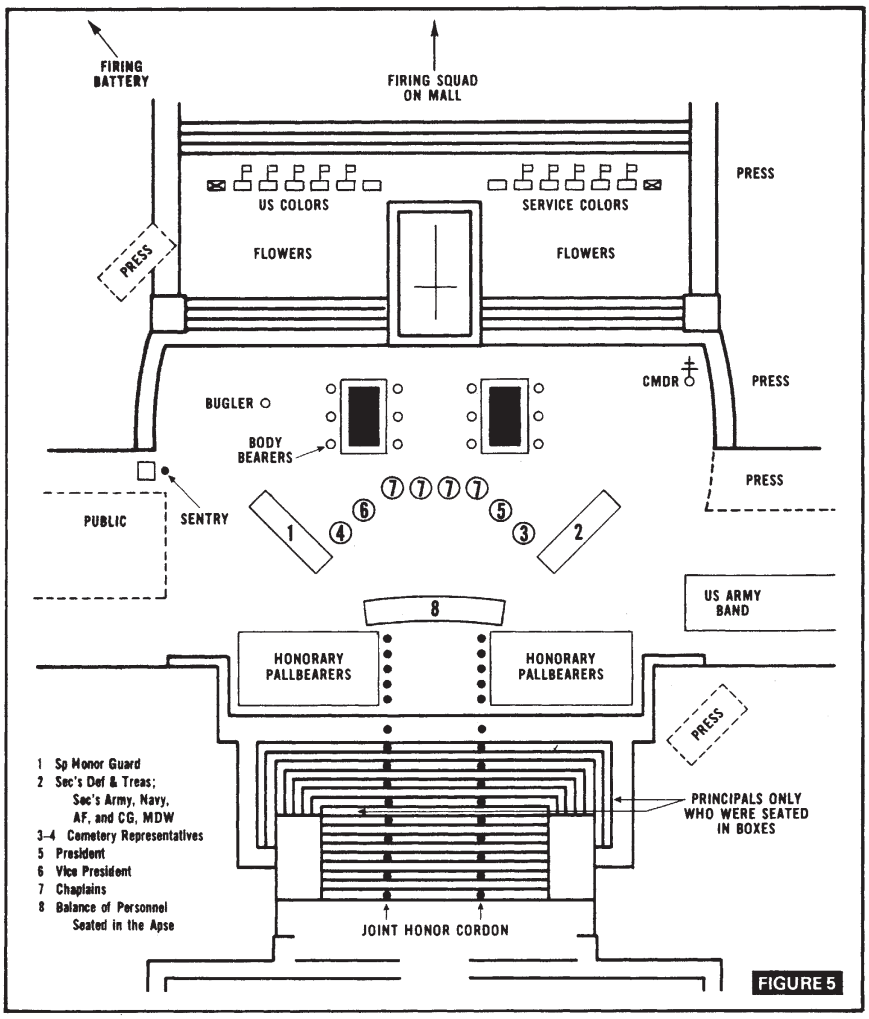
President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Vice President Nixon meanwhile had arrived from the White House but remained outside the amphitheatre until dignitaries in the cortege had dismounted and taken seats. General Van Houten, commander of the Military District of Washington, escorted the Vice President to his seat, while Secretary of the Army Wilber M. Brucker escorted the President to his. Members of the public were then allowed to fill any unoccupied seats.

After the audience was seated, the US Army Band outside the amphitheatre played four ruffles and flourishes, followed by a hymn. During the hymn the bearers removed the caskets from the caissons and, led by clergy and the colours, carried them inside. The Unknown Soldier of World War II was borne through the south entrance and the Korean War Unknown Soldier through the entrance to the north. Just inside the amphitheatre, each casket was set on a movable bier and wheeled around the colonnade to the apse, where the World War II Unknown Soldier was placed in front of President Eisenhower and the Korean War Unknown Soldier in front of Vice President Nixon. After the caskets were in place, the Marine Band played the national anthem.

The Army Chief of Chaplains, General Ryan, then delivered the invocation. At its conclusion a bugler sounded attention three times and a two-minute period of silence followed. The Army Chorus and the audience sang 'America', after which President Eisenhower arose and placed a Medal of Honor on each casket. The reading of scripture and singing to religious music followed. As the funeral service was brought to a close by the Marine Band's postlude, the Unknown Soldiers were taken to the amphitheatre's Trophy Room. The Presidential party also withdrew to the Trophy Room, while the audience made its way to the plaza at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier for the burial service.

The Unknown Soldiers were taken from the Trophy Room, in a procession that included the Presidential party, to the head of the plaza

Below: **Formation for the burial service on the plaza as seen in the** *photo above.*



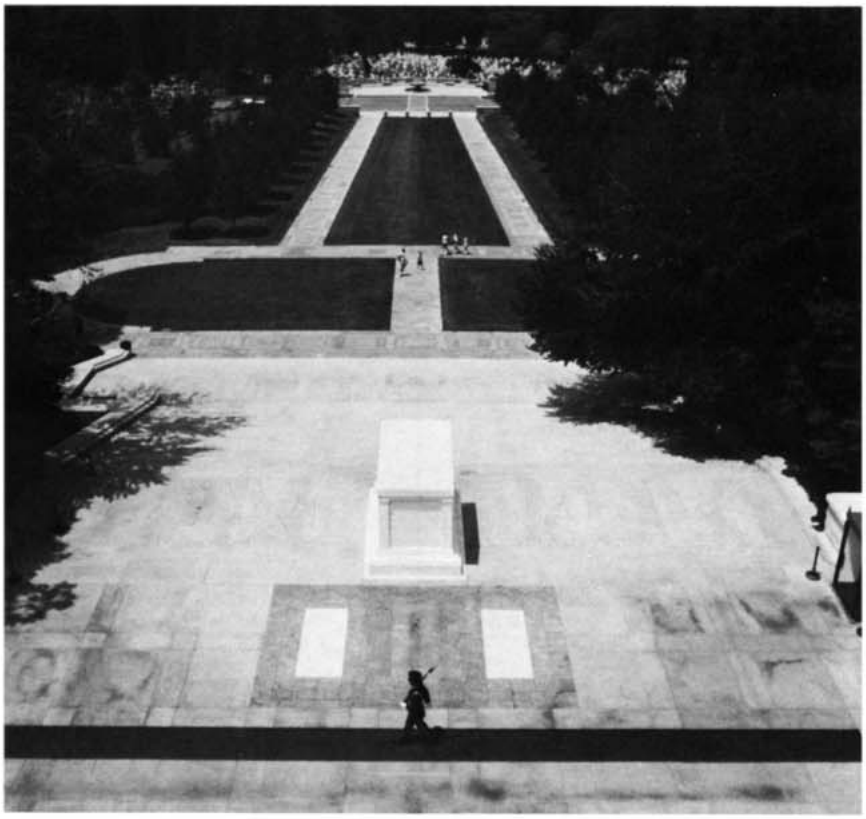
President Eisenhower places a wreath of red and white carnations at the First World War sarcophagus. The World War II Unknown Soldier is in the foreground. In each case the flag was presented by the man on the extreme left with his back to the camera — both Medal of Honor recipients. The flag from the WWII casket was given by Master Sergeant Ernest R. Kouma and the Korean by Sergeant 1st Class Ronald E. Rosser — they both won their awards for bravery in Korea (US Army).

steps. There the procession halted while the Army Band sounded four ruffles and flourishes. After this salute the procession descended the steps, and the body bearers placed the caskets over the crypts *(see Fig. 5)*. They then took hold of the flags that had draped the caskets and held them taut above the caskets.

Three chaplains, General Ryan, a Catholic, Admiral Harp, a Protestant and Colonel Pincus, a Jew, each conducted the burial service of his faith. The saluting battery of the 3rd Infantry then fired twenty-one guns. At the first round, the minute-gun battery on the Washington Monument grounds ceased firing. After the gun salute, a squad of eight from the 3rd Infantry fired the traditional three volleys and, immediately afterward, a 3rd Infantry bugler sounded taps. The body bearers then folded the flags and presented them to the President and Vice President, who in turn gave them to cemetery officials for safekeeping and subsequent display in the Trophy room.

The presentation of the flags completed the burial service. After the participants had left the plaza, the public, guided by members of the 3rd Infantry, filed by the crypts. Later in the evening, at about 9.00 p.m., cemetery superintendent John C. Metzler and his assistant, F. A. Lockwood, lowered the caskets. The body bearers stood behind a guide chain and saluted as the caskets sank into their crypts. This was the last rite in the ceremonies that throughout the day had involved some 4,800 members of the armed forces.

The final act, not part of any planned ceremony, took place on June 2, 1958. On that date, each crypt was sealed with a concrete slab and topped with white marble. The marble tops bore only dates: 1941-1945 for the Unknown American of World War II, 1950-1953 for the Unknown American of the Korean War. At the same time, the dates 1917-1918 were carved in the pavement in front of the tomb of the Unknown Soldier of World War I.



The addition of two more burials in the Memorial Amphitheater led to subsequent confusion and argument over the correct name for the site. Originally titled 'The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier', this was changed to 'Tomb of the Unknowns' until Marguerite Church, Congresswoman from Illinois, sponsored a resolution to revert to the previous description. There was also sentiment for a Vietnam unknown soldier but advances in medical science resulted in every casualty from that war being identified. Instead President Carter unveiled a plaque dedicated to all those who died, on November 11, 1978.

SOE HUDSON IN LUXEMBOURG

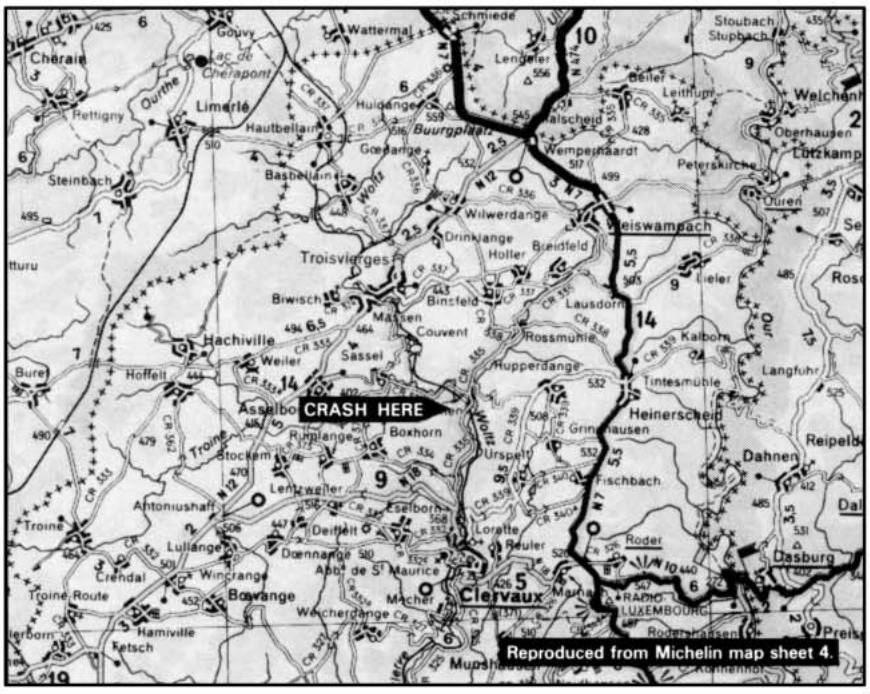
In March 1945, although Allied forces were securely entrenched along the whole length of the Rhine, operations were still being carried out by the Special Operations Executive to those areas of Europe still occupied by German forces. On the evening of March 20 the prospect of a fine night enabled thirteen aircraft to be prepared for secret missions at the SOE airfield at Tempsford in Bedfordshire.

The first of the eight Stirlings and five Hudsons from No. 161 Squadron on operations that night was airborne at 6.48 p.m., the remainder taking off at various intervals over the next three hours. Hudson IIIA, FK803, piloted by Flight Lieutenant Anthony Helfer, took off at eight minutes past seven. The crew consisted of the navigator, Flying Officer Henry Johnson; wireless operator Flight Lieutenant Raymond Escreet and the air gunner Flying Officer Forrest Thompson. Their 'cargo' consisted of three Belgian secret service agents, Lieutenants J. Morel, L. De Winter and G. Corbisier. Destination for the three officers of the Surete de l'Etat Belge was the German town of Erfurt, some 230 miles east of Cologne.

Details and the purpose of the flight are now obscure and cannot be reliably established but, at 12.45 a.m. on the morning of the 21st, Father Michel Magerus, the cure in the little Luxembourg hamlet of Hupperdange six kilometres north of Clervaux, heard two aircraft overhead. Suddenly there were three bursts of machine gun fire and when he looked out of the window he saw an aircraft in the sky on fire.

Fifteen minutes later there was a knock at his door. At that time, Luxembourg had only experienced two months of freedom after five years of German occupation and this was not long enough to dispel the apprehension of the midnight rap at the front door. At first Father Magerus was afraid, believing the big man he could see outside was a German but, when he opened the door, the stranger said, 'I am English. I have burnt my hands and face'.

After helping the wounded man inside, the man told him he had parachuted from a burning aircraft and that all the crew had perished when it crashed. After landing near the village, he had concealed his parachute, escape map and saw and discarded his flying helmet and knocked at the first house he came to but without receiving an answer. He had then made his way to the church. He explained that his name was Tony Helfer and that he was a pilot returning from Germany when his aircraft had been attacked by an enemy plane.



By now the wounded man's face and hands had begun to swell and he could talk no more. Father Magerus tried to explain that he had no telephone or car and that help would be difficult to organise. Giving the airmen a little drop of brandy he had managed to save after the Germans had ransacked his home before retreating a month before, he dressed his wounds as best he could using linen from his bed.

Early the following morning contact was made with American forces and, at 9.30 a.m., an ambulance came to collect the pilot and take him to the US field hospital at Clervaux. Before leaving he told the cure where he could find his parachute which was recovered by his curate Pierre Dalscheid. When Father Magerus went to visit Helfer three days later, he found that the hospital had moved together with its British patient.

He heard nothing more until some weeks after the war had ended when he was summoned to appear as a witness at a court-martial in Brussels. Flight Lieutenant Helfer, after recovery from his wounds in Britain, was being charged with leaving his aircraft too soon and deserting his crew. Father Magerus' testimony of how he had tended the wounded and bleeding pilot who had only just managed to escape from the burning plane as it was about to crash helped to exonerate Helfer and he was acquitted. Subsequently he was promoted and transferred to the Far East. Although he kept in touch with Father Magerus, contact suddenly ceased in 1965.

The three crew members that had died in the crash, together with the three Belgians, were buried by the villagers where they had fallen — on a hillside near the railway station at Maulusmillen, two kilometres from Hupperdange. Headstones were erected and the remains of the Hudson were laid out alongside to form a stirring and unique memorial.

When the Commonwealth War Graves Commission found that the graves were so well maintained by the local people, they wrote to the next of kin to ask if they would like the remains left where they were. All assented but, because of the inaccessability of the location, special memorial headstones to the three British crew members were erected in Hotton War Cemetery in Belgium.

Above: **The shattered tail section still bears the faded serial FK803.** *Below:* **The memorial headstones to the three RAF crewmen in Hotton War Cemetery in Belgium.**

Today the little-known memorial stands deep in the Ardennes still lovingly tended by the Luxembourgers. Rarely can one visit the graves without finding them decorated with flowers or wreaths . . . in the forest stillness it is the perfect setting to a crew that failed to return.

The Belgian graves lie on the left and the British crewman to the right.